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THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A Magazine of International Labour

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In Memory of

SHAPURJI SAKLATVALA

March 28th, 1874—January 16th, 1936

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

The New International Situation—Italy and Wider Issues—British Foreign Policy—The National Government's "Dual" Policy—Growing Difficulties—The Paris Plan—The Significance of the December Crisis—Laval and Germany—Hitler and the Franco-Soviet Pact—Laval on the Franco-Soviet Pact—British-French Collaboration—German Line—Britain, France and Germany—Warning Signals—Japan and Germany—American Rôle—The Crux of the Fight.

The death of Shapurji Saklatvala removes from our midst one of the most valued contributors of the LABOUR MONTHLY *since its earliest days. Shapurji Saklatvala was in the truest and highest sense a revolutionary tribune of the people, a leader of the British working class and of the exploited and subject peoples all over the world against the bondage of imperialism and for the victory of the international revolution. The British working class, to whom he devoted the twenty-six most fruitful years of his life in ceaseless labour and struggle, owes him a deep and imperishable debt. The Communist Party, whose banner he upheld from its foundation, for whom he first blazed the trail of representation in Parliament, to whose cause he gave unflinching service through all this decade and a half, owes no little of its present growing hold in the heart of the masses to his work and to his teaching. Trade Unionism has lost one of its most devoted champions, who understood as no other the unity of the trade union fight in Britain and in the Empire. In India, and among all the subject peoples of the British Empire, his name is a name of veneration. The armed might of the British Empire feared this man as no other, whose only weapon was the truth, and dared not let him tread foot in its subject territories or even among his own people in the country of his birth. Saklatvala represented an idea, which is only beginning to reach fruition, the idea of the union of the workers in the imperialist countries with the exploited masses in the colonies as the indispensable condition*

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of victory over imperialism. To this cause he devoted his life. In him burned the true fire of revolutionary internationalism, the hatred of all oppression, the burning enthusiasm springing from the depths of love for humanity, which made him one of the greatest orators of our generation and the beloved of the masses wherever he spoke. In the history of the international revolution and in the memories of many peoples over the earth the stature of Saklatvala will grow greater as time recedes, and as the great work to which he set his hand goes forward to the victory for which he laid the foundations.

IT is necessary to sound once again a warning note on the new developments that are taking place in the sphere of foreign policy. Much in the situation is still obscure ; and it would be a mistake to over-simplify a complex situation with many conflicting forces. But since the December crisis and the formal defeat of the premature Hoare-Laval conspiracy for saving Italian fascism and partitioning Abyssinia, all the evidence goes to show that the British National Government is going forward more rapidly than ever with its basic policy, not only in respect of Italy and Abyssinia, but also in the wider world situation ; and that the war-making forces in the world situation, both in Germany and Japan, and also in the dominant reactionary circles in Britain and France, are advancing their offensive in opposition to the line of collective security. A series of important new developments in the international situation since the December crisis may be noted. First, the British-French military, naval and air collaboration, with unstated further commitments in diplomatic policy underlying this collaboration. Second, the renewed British-French attempts to find a means of saving Italian fascism, which continues to weaken in the face of the successful Abyssinian resistance and the growing internal discontent. Third, the French-German negotiations and now open pro-Hitler orientation of Laval, alongside the close British-German negotiations, with the underlying aim in both cases of security in Western Europe and the free hand for Germany in the East. Fourth, the rising demands and aggressive line of Nazi Germany, with increasing

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discussion of colonial redistribution for the benefit of Germany and the inclusion of Germany in a "reformed" League of Nations. Fifth, the Japanese break with the Naval Conference, and intensified aggression in North China. Sixth, the United States declaration of a policy of neutrality in a future war with waiving of insistence on its claims of freedom of the seas, to this extent freeing the possibilities of British war action under certain conditions. What will be the outcome? It is of the utmost importance to endeavour to estimate the direction in which these differing forces and tendencies are leading.

AT the outset, in order to determine these forces, it is essential to guard against the misconception which sees the Italian-Abyssinian issue in isolation as the central issue of British foreign policy, because this question is in the immediate forefront of practical problems and discussion, while the more basic aims of British policy are kept in the background. The Italian issue is and throughout has been *a complication* from the standpoint of British policy, cutting across the main aims—a complication which British policy has consistently sought to limit and resolve by any type of settlement compatible with its interests in the region involved, in order to free its hands for its main aims. This wider perspective is the essential explanation of the apparent contradictions and variations of British policy in relation to Italy, the simultaneous strong and even bellicose line in defence of its own interests and at the same time repeated offers of an extremely favourable settlement to Italy, the alternate proclamations of an unyielding League line immediately followed by the most gross and open betrayals of the League. The double line is less the reflection of the conflict of two camps than of two aspects of a single basic policy.

WHEREIN lies this double line, the "dualism" directly proclaimed by Hoare and Baldwin? The wider aims of British policy are directed, in the first place towards world questions of the United States, Japan and the Pacific, and in the second place within Europe, towards

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a united front of Western Imperialism under British hegemony, through a strengthened and re-armed Germany to counter-balance the former French predominance, thus constituting a Concert of the Western Powers in Europe within which Britain can maintain and control the equilibrium, and with the ultimate point directed against the Soviet Union. This line appears and reappears through the post-war era, through Locarno and the Four-Power Pact, as a guiding direction under all the variations of day-to-day policy. In the most recent period it has shown itself in the support of Nazi rearmament and the general sympathy for the fascist revisionist offensive. This line is essentially hostile to the universalist League system of collective peace, and only has use for the League in so far as it can be controlled and curbed, even in violation of its own statutes, by the Western Powers.

FROM the standpoint of this line Italy is an essential pillar of the *bloc* of counter-revolution and imperialism, a partner to be wooed and won. Hence, the repeated expressions of official "sympathy" towards the Italian fascist expansionist aims and postponement of any definite stand during the ten months of open preparation of war. But it is equally essential that the fascist war offensive should not be carried through in directions endangering British interests, but should be confined and canalised in its main onslaught to the direction of Eastern Europe, where British official expression has repeatedly declared, with an air of complete innocence of any war-inciting intention, that British interests are not involved. Hence, the repeated affirmation of British-French unity against any Nazi aggression in the West. Hence, equally, the necessity to make a stand when the Italian launching of war threatened British interests in North Africa. For this purpose the League was invoked. But it was of the essence of the policy that the pressure on Italy should not go too far, that only "mild" sanctions should be employed, that League principles should not be taken too literally with any too nice regard for the obligations of upholding the "territorial integrity" of Abyssinia, but that the first opportunity should be taken of reaching a settlement

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as favourable as possible to Italy at the expense of Abyssinia, so long as British interests were safeguarded. This was the "dual" policy consistently followed, and in practice continuing to be followed, by British imperialism.

THIS policy, however, has met with unexpected difficulties and complications in the attempt to carry it out. In the first place, the Italian war of aggression on Abyssinia has let loose mass forces in all countries which went beyond the calculations of the governments. The mass movement of sympathy with the Abyssinian struggle, fusing into a single force all the popular sympathies of the fight for peace, of the colonial struggle for liberation and of the fight against the hated fascist tyrannies, has swept alike through imperialist countries and through colonial countries. In the League countries this mass movement has correctly taken advantage of the official stand of the governments on the basis of the League Covenant in order to demand of the governments the fulfilment of their Covenant obligations by an unyielding stand for complete Abyssinian independence and for effective measures of economic resistance against the fascist aggression. The correctness of these tactics (as against the doctrinaire line which refused to take advantage of these contradictions of imperialism, regarded Abyssinian defeat and subjugation as inevitable, and in practice united with the pro-fascist sections in all countries in opposing League action and thus supporting a free hand for Mussolini) has now been abundantly demonstrated by the outcome. The strength of the mass demand for Abyssinian independence and for resistance to the fascist war-makers, with inevitable wide support from the ranks of the National Government's own supporters who accepted at face value its League professions, has enormously increased the difficulties in the way of putting through the intended imperialist settlement at the expense of Abyssinia, as the December crisis showed.

NOT only this, but the Abyssinian resistance has proved much stronger and more skilful than had been calculated by the imperialists, while the fascist dictatorship revealed

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its boasted efficiency to be at a low military level. In consequence, while the British policy was directed to preventing either an Italian or an Abyssinian victory, the danger began to come into view of the possibility of an Abyssinian victory, with repercussions stimulating the whole colonial struggle throughout Africa and Asia, and of an Italian fascist collapse, with repercussions through Europe. This consideration above all made a speedy settlement urgent. Finally, the other imperialist countries in Europe showed a disposition to take advantage of the British embarrassment to press their own claims. Nazi Germany raised the level of its claims, as the interview of the British Ambassador with Hitler in December revealed. France demanded guarantees in Europe as a condition of assistance. All these considerations led the British Government to endeavour to reach any settlement with the utmost speed. Hoare in Paris accepted the Mussolini-Laval draft, exceeding the concessions already worked out by the British Foreign Office, as a desperate attempt to find a way out from all these gathering complications by a quick peace. There followed the revolt against the Paris Plan, the December crisis and the fall of Hoare.

WHAT was the significance of the December crisis? It has been widely presented in the liberal press as a victory of the revolt of mass opinion against the National Government's flagrant betrayal of League principles and attempted imperialist settlement to reward the aggressor at the expense of the invaded country. Undoubtedly, there was a powerful mass revolt which startled the Government by its strength and is of far-reaching permanent significance as an indication of the forces which can be mobilised. But we should beware of too easily dramatising the conflict in these terms or claiming the victory. Though the Paris Plan was scotched, the definite victory was not won. There were in fact two elements in the revolt. There was the element of popular opinion. But there was also the element of powerful sections of the ruling forces of British policy, represented by the *Times*, which were not at all actuated by altruistic concern for the League or Abyssinia, but were very definitely of opinion that Hoare had

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bargained away to much and endangered vital British interests. And it was these sections that won. But these sections were the most direct representatives of the basic British policy, and in particular of close co-operation with Nazi Germany. The National Government had to sacrifice Hoare, but the National Government remained to carry forward the same basic policy. The leaders of the National Government were able to get away with the plea that they had made "a mistake"—as if it were possible to violate the Covenant and hand over Abyssinian territory to the invader "by mistake." Indeed, so far was there from being any recognition of a change in policy that Neville Chamberlain was able to say with insolent frankness in the parliamentary debate on December 19 that: "though I recognise to-day that that decision was a mistake, I cannot say that in similar circumstances I should not commit that mistake again." And in fact to-day the National Government is going forward with the same policy, both in respect of endeavouring to push through a settlement to save Italian fascism, and in the wider European field.

THE wider significance of this policy was most sharply brought out by Laval in his speech to the French Chamber on December 29. In this speech he reported the final conversation with Hoare and showed what was at the back of their minds in the famous "Peace Plan." He said:

> I will tell you the last thing I said to Sir Samuel Hoare. "If this conciliation could succeed, what splendid prospects would open before us, thanks to Franco-British co-operation. To-morrow, together, we would try to bring Germany into the system of collective security."

"*To bring Germany in*"—*this was the ulterior aim behind the Hoare-Laval Plan.* In other words: first reward the Italian fascist aggressor with the spoils which it was failing to win by military means, destroy the meaning of the Covenant, turn the League into the complaisant instrument of fascist aggression, and then on this basis invite Nazi Germany to condescend to return to the League on this reformed basis, with the tacit invitation to go and do likewise in Eastern Europe. "What splendid prospects would open before us."

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AND the Franco-Soviet Pact? Laval went on to state that on his instruction the French Ambassador in Berlin, M. Francois-Poncet, had read out the following declaration to Hitler:

> In a few days the French Chamber will ratify the Franco-Soviet Pact. M. Laval has no intention of following in any way a policy of isolation or encirclement against Germany. He regrets that you have refused to take part in the organisation of security in the East. He regrets that you refuse to join in a mutual assistance pact of non-aggression. He asks for confirmation of the declarations you have made that you have no intentions of aggression.

What did Hitler reply? This question was shouted from the benches of the French Chamber. Laval only answered:

> Herr Hitler and M. Francois-Poncet were in agreement to express their desire for relationships of good neighbours between our two countries.

"Between our two countries"—*i.e.*, Hitler refused to give any answer on the question of his aggressive intentions in Eastern Europe, and on the question of the Eastern Pact. And it was on this basis, with the open expansionist aims of Nazi Germany, that Laval spoke of the "splendid prospect" of a *rapprochement* with Hitler.

BUT Laval went further in his veiled attack on the Franco-Soviet Pact, whose ratification he has manœuvred to delay for the better part of a year, and whose functioning, now that its ratification begins to appear inevitable he is at present working to rob of its effectiveness. It will be remembered that Simon as Foreign Secretary had already last May declared the British view of the Franco-Soviet Pact as subordinate to Locarno, so that France would not be free to act under it without the consent of Britain. This view was now repeated by Laval.

> I have insisted on this pact, like all the other diplomatic arrangements I have negotiated, being kept within the spirit and the letter of the Covenant. It is a pact to organise mutual assistance in the event of one or other of the two countries being attacked. In no case can there be any question of a contradiction between the Franco-Soviet Pact and Locarno. I have not accepted the principle of

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> automatic functioning of the Pact (*l'automatisme du pacte*) without the question being first examined by the Council of the League.

The joker is scarcely hidden here. The Franco-Soviet Pact explicitly lays down "immediate" aid and assistance in the event of unprovoked aggression, as is laid down in Article 16 of the Covenant as obligatory already before recourse to the Council ("immediately to lend each other aid and assistance in application of Article 16 of the Covenant," "the U.S.S.R. and reciprocally France shall immediately come to each other's aid and assistance"). But Laval claims that, in virtue of the restrictions of Locarno, even in the event of the German-Polish alliance suddenly launching a lightning offensive against the Soviet Union, France shall take no action and regard the pact as inoperative until recourse has been had to the infinitely dilatory procedure of the Council of the League, or, in other words, that French action shall be subject to the approval of Britain.

IT is in this situation that the new British-French naval, military and air co-operation takes on special significance. The *Times* of January 1, writes of "the thoroughness of the military, naval and air consultations which have been in progress."

> Plans for Franco-British action by sea are complete down to the last detail. . . . . If consultations between the military and air staffs have not reached quite the same stage of detail, this can be explained by two things. One is that whereas the naval talks began in October, those for the other arms started only on December 10. The other is that both by land and air the question is far more complicated. Here the question of mobilisation is even more delicate, while it is felt that something in the nature of reciprocal action would be required.

It is notorious that what is here involved goes beyond the Italian issue. Strategic collaboration is the counterpart of diplomatic collaboration. What are the commitments that have passed between Britain and France to make possible these elaborate strategic preparations? To what is the common aim of Laval and Baldwin directed? On what basis has this collaboration succeeded to the previous sharp differences?

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A POINTER towards the answer is to be found in the German press. The German press officially expresses resentment and anger at the close British-French military collaboration, which it openly regards as directed, not against Italy, but against Germany. The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* of January 13, declares this collaboration to be a violation of Locarno, and prepares the ground on this basis for the claim to renewed military occupation of the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland. The *Berliner Tageblatt* complains that Germany is always regarded as the potential aggressor, despite Hitler's peace declarations, denounces all regional pacts, including the Eastern Pact, and poses the question of German re-entry into the League of Nations. Meanwhile the British statesmen and press emphasise the menace of German armaments to prove the necessity of a heavy British rearmament programme.

THUS there is all the appearance of a British-French front against Nazi Germany. Does this contradict the close French-German negotiations for an understanding that are being pressed forward by Laval, alongside the close British-German negotiations, the proposal of the Western Air Pact, the talk of the restoration of colonies to Germany, the "splendid prospect" to "bring Germany in" into a reorganised League system? Not at all. They are the two parts of a single policy. For it is of the essence of the whole policy that an impassable barrier should be erected against German expansion to the West, thus in fact forcing that expansion to the East. And indeed through all the official expressions of complaint in the German press can be read the undertones of complete confidence in Britain and in British support. Similarly may be noted the recent review of Polish foreign policy by Colonel Beck, in which he simultaneously denounced the Eastern Pact, lauded the alliance with Germany, and proclaimed the complete unity of Polish policy with the aims of Britain ("Any differences between Great Britain's fundamental aims in Europe and the vital interests of our policy seem to be improbable"). The "British-German-Polish *bloc*," openly spoken of in the press of the smaller countries of Northern and Eastern

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Europe, is far from dead. What is happening at the moment is that French policy, under the disastrous leadership of Laval, representing the most reactionary pro-fascist forces, is weakening on the Franco-Soviet Pact and veering towards an understanding with this *bloc*, at the expense of the sacrifice of its interests in Eastern Europe (the *Manchester Guardian* has reported that already in November Laval was offering to sacrifice Lithuania and Austria to Germany as the price of an agreement) in the hope of an imaginary security in the West. Only the victory of the People's Front can defeat this pro-fascist policy of Laval, which opens the path to war in Europe and carry through the fight for the line of collective peace and the Franco-Soviet Pact.

The New York *Herald Tribune* reported on November 11 :

> Premier Laval, who is also Foreign Minister, is a strong partisan of an agreement between the French Third Republic and the Nazi Third Reich, and is reported to be willing to scrap the Franco-Soviet Alliance, which has been signed but not ratified by the French Parliament, for an agreement whereby the Hitler régime would guarantee France's eastern frontier in exchange for complete freedom of action in the Memel region and in the Ukraine.

With this may be compared Goebbels' secret press instructions, as reported in the Basel *Rundschau* of January 9 :

> Only when in France the antagonism to the Third Reich has disappeared from public sentiment, will Germany have a free hand in Eastern Europe.

To this may be added the *Observer's* Berlin correspondent's report of the German view of the Western Air Pact (December 15, 1935) :

> The Air Pact has another attractive side : it excludes Soviet Russia, and thus takes its place beside the naval agreement with England as a political agreement concluded by Germany with the Great Powers whose friendship she wishes to win.

Finally may be noted the openly aggressive tone of Hitler's New Year Message for 1936 to the effect that :

> To remain a bulwark of National European discipline against the Bolshevik enemy of mankind would be their most ardent effort in the coming year.

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NO less important are the continually closer relations of Germany and Japan. On December 1 a conference of Japanese naval attachés in Europe took place in Berlin. This was followed by a conference of Japanese military attachés together with Von Ribbentrop. A military Japanese-German convention is reported to have been drawn up and initialled, together with a further secret convention of a political character, nominally for "common struggle against the Communist International" (*Humanité*, December 28, 1935). At the same time Japan goes forward with its aggressive policy in the Far East, extending at an accelerating momentum its spoliation of North China, and pursuing its ceaseless provocations on the Soviet borders and against Outer Mongolia.

WHERE is this leading? On the one side, the Soviet Union is compelled to increase its armed protection against the combined open menace and offensive threats of Germany and Japan. On the other side, Japan completes its denunciation of the Washington Treaty by withdrawing from the Naval Conference. The Japanese aggressive policy strongly antagonises the United States, as well as alarming considerable sections of the ruling forces in Britain. This leads to American moves for a measure of co-operation with Britain and the League, which received their reflection in President Roosevelt's statement of January 4 to Congress and the Neutrality Bill. President Roosevelt's message denounced the war-making autocracies which proclaimed their belief in their conquering mission and the religion of the sword in terms that sufficiently clearly indicated Japan, Germany and Italy. The Neutrality Bill, whatever its more obscure ultimate effect, if carried, undoubtedly indicates a readiness at present to waive the insistence on the claim of freedom of the seas and to co-operate to a certain extent in collective economic measures against the war-makers. In this way it opens the path, if the National Government were ready to take it, to a measure of temporary Anglo-American co-operation which, if combined with Anglo-Soviet co-operation, with the Franco-Soviet Pact and the collective basis of the League, would be fully capable of holding

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in check the aggression of the fascist war-makers. In particular, in the present immediate situation it holds out the full possibility for the enforcement of the oil embargo ; and, in the anxious words of Hoare to the House of Commons on December 19, " the oil embargo might have such an effect upon hostilities as to force their termination."

BUT what is the policy of the National Government ? Here we come to the crux of the situation. Whatever the final decision that may be taken on the oil embargo, it is manifest that the whole guiding thoughts of Baldwin, as of Laval, are directed not to defeating the fascist aggression, not to taking advantage of the temporary possibility of co-operation with the United States and the permanent possibility of co-operation with the Soviet Union for the maintenance of world peace, but to save fascism, to strengthen the fascist dictatorships, to reach a common basis with Nazi Germany, and thus in practice to assist the advance to war. Here is the centre of the immediate fight. The tenure of Laval is not likely to be long-lasting : the People's Front is advancing in strength, and while the menace of a fascist coup remains in France, the fight is open and the masses have closed their ranks for the battle. But in Britain we have not yet the united front. In Britain the National Government is still able to pursue its menacing policy unchecked. The key to the world situation lies at the present moment in London. It is the National Government and the Bank of England that is the secret base of support of Hitler-Schacht Germany, just as these same forces work to save the weakening fascist régime in Italy. If this support were removed the fascist menace could be held in check and the way opened, not only for the lowering of the immediate intensity of the war danger, but for the popular forces in Italy and Germany to advance in strength. Never was there greater need to intensify the fight against the National Government as the heart of the fight against the menace of war and against fascist aggression.

R. P. D.

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THE FIGHT FOR UNITY IN PARLIAMENT

By WM. GALLACHER, M.P.

DURING the election campaign in West Fife the most was made of the argument, " There's no use in voting for Gallacher ; if he's returned he'll be all alone and won't be able to do anything."

But I was returned and I am far from being alone. From the first I have been warmly welcomed by old friends and comrades in the Parliamentary Labour Party. I was invited to make myself at home amongst them and given every possible aid and encouragement to find my way about in the somewhat strange job that had now been given me to do.

At first there was some doubt in the Labour Party, as a whole, as to whether I might not associate with the Maxton group and thereby become an added source of irritation to them, but there was no doubt in my mind. The line of the Communist Party in the General Election, which was the line of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, was a clear guide to me for my work in the House of Commons. Unity of all the forces against the National Government. Unity in Parliament, and unity outside of Parliament, for this the Communist Party and I, as representative of that Party in the House of Commons, had to work. In pursuance of this policy of unity the Party has applied for affiliation, while I, in keeping with this, applied for the Labour Party Whip. While I have not been accorded the " whip," it has not been refused me in any real meaning of the word. With the constitution of the Labour Party such as it is at the present time, it is not possible for the Parliamentary Party to accept me as an official member. This, of course, I understood and so appreciated very much the decision of the Executive of the Parliamentary Party, that the leader of the Party, Mr. Attlee, should have a talk with me and explain the position. Attlee strikes me as being a clean, straight and likeable colleague and should make a capable leader if there is efficient team-work developed in the Labour Party. Of that I will say something later.

Following the decision of the Executive he spoke to me and after explaining the position, expressed the hope that I would get on all right with them and that they would help me in any way they could. It is now for the Party to carry out its work in such a way that all resistance to affiliation will be effectively broken down. There is no doubt at all but what we can achieve this at this year's Labour Party Conference, if we effectively apply ourselves to the task. In all parts of the country the

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workers and the small middle class traders and professional people associated with the workers want unity, and if correctly approached will support our application for affiliation. In the ranks of the Parliamentary Labour Party also, as amongst hundreds of Labour councillors throughout the country, the feeling for unity is growing, and with it an entirely new attitude towards the Communist Party and a higher appreciation of its work. When in the course of my first speech in Parliament I made a reference " to the party represented on these benches, *from which at the moment I am an outcast*," there were cries of denial. " No, no, Willie," not only from those who are classed as " advanced," but from those who had always been looked on as the most implacable enemies of the Communist Party.

But one of the urgent questions of unity that demands an immediate solution, is the present position and attitude of the I.L.P. group in the House of Commons and in the country. In the House of Commons the relations between the group and the Labour Party are exceptionally bad, almost incredibly so. The I.L.P.'ers shun the Labour members as though they were a plague to be avoided at all costs, while in the Labour Party there has grown up a feeling of angry irritation and deep distrust as a consequence of their (the I.L.P.'ers') behaviour in discussions and their associations in the Lobbies.

On several occasions during my short experience I have witnessed several unsavoury exhibitions. The most notable, but not the only one, was when Thomas was making one of his well-known gutter attacks on the Labour Party, Campbell Stephen kept up a chorus of jeers at the Labour benches such as " he's right," " you can't answer him," and so on. The effect of such conduct on the new young members of the Labour Party is to arouse them to indignant anger against the men who are prepared to " kick their own side " when the enemy is attacking. In their speeches also they continually receive the hearty approval of the Tories for their nasty sniping at the Labour Party. However, after the first day or two, this sniping took a new turn. Obviously they had been expecting me, despite the clear lead of our Party in the elections, to indulge in this game of " popularising " myself with the enemies of the working class. When they found that I was continuing the policy of the Communist Party in relation to the Labour Party, they turned their sniping activities in my direction. I now stand as a buffer between them and the object of their past attentions, so all their darts are thrown at me.

But this futile and foolish behaviour will get them nowhere and will have, sooner or later, to be ended. The gulf that now exists between them and the members of the Labour Party must be bridged, however difficult this may be of achievement. There is no doubt whatever that Maxton could play a much bigger part in the movement inside and outside

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of Parliament if the present tactics of his group were dropped and a better attitude towards the Labour Party adopted.

In the Parliamentary Labour Party itself there is need for a much better understanding of party policy and party loyalty. There is far too much "playing one's own hand" and too little concerted effort directed against the National Government. This was demonstrated in a very striking manner in the big debate on the Hoare-Laval plan. This debate opened with Hoare's speech in which he insisted that "Oil sanctions" were "War" sanctions, and would lead to war in Europe. The idea being that Mussolini, driven desperate, would commit some "mad-dog" act in Europe which would embroil Italy in war with Britain and other European nations. Never was there such a fallacious or untenable argument. Mussolini would certainly be driven desperate through the firm application of oil sanctions, because it would be impossible for him to continue the war against Abyssinia. If it were made impossible for him to go on with the war in Abyssinia, then surely it is absurd to suggest that he could start in on a brand new war in Europe.

When Hoare got finished with his attempted justification of the proposed betrayal of Abyssinia, Attlee took the floor. He made a strong, reasoned, well-argued speech in which he showed that for what had happened, Baldwin and the hard-faced gang around him were equally responsible with Hoare. That all of them were equally guilty and all of them should share his fate. It was a sound lead in this big debate, but it was a lead that wasn't followed up by the members of the Labour Party who got an opportunity of participating in the debate. Not till the time came for Dalton to wind up, was Attlee's lead taken up and supported. Between the first speech and the last it was every man for himself. Sir Stafford Cripps, while he made criticism of the Government, was more concerned with accepting Hoare's thesis, that "Oil sanctions" were "War" sanctions and of utilising this for scoring, in his best, or worst, law-court manner at the expense of a feeble-witted member on the other side. He then went onto deliver himself of the usual "Left" phrases, about war being "inevitable" under Capitalism, that all capitalist states were the same, and until we got Socialism we could not get out of war. In the midst of this confused jumble, which was all directed towards weakening support for the League of Nations and Collective Peace, a Tory interjected: "Then why has the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations?" To this he made a reply that in itself is a complete exposure of his pretentious folly. The Soviet Union, he said, being a Communist State and isolated, had joined the League in order through pacts and agreements to defend itself from attack. Pacts and agreements with the States which according to him made war "inevitable." What an understanding of the international situation and the rôle of the Soviet Union! When the Soviet Union was "isolated" with no diplomatic recognition anywhere,

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it looked on and treated the League of Nations as a centre of imperialist intrigue. Then Cripps was for the League of Nations. But now the Soviet Union is no longer isolated. With growing strength it broke down barrier after barrier, until it has diplomatic recognition, trade agreements with all the principal countries, and Peace Pacts with many of its neighbours. On the basis of the First Five-Year Plan and the mighty achievements this registered it became and remains the dominant factor in world economy. It stands forth ahead of all others. At the same time as these great advances were taking place great changes were taking place in the international situation, and were expressed in the changing character of the League of Nations. The withdrawal of Japan, followed by that of Germany, was significant of this change. The Soviet Union, not isolated and looking for protection, but mighty and strong, seized the opportunity and entered the League of Nations in order to drive ahead with its working-class policy of Collective Peace. Cripps, who was for the League when it was a den of imperialist war intrigue, is now against it when the first Socialist State is bending all its energies with the support of workers everywhere, to make it a real centre against aggression and war. This speech was a purely " personal " speech and was not in any real way a follow-up of the lead given by the leader of the party.

Then Maxton got in and wasted ten or fifteen minutes talking around the utterly absurd amendment which had been put down by the I.L.P. The central idea of this, if it can be called an idea, was that nothing could be done until the workers got power. It sounds very revolutionary, but it's just childish nonsense. Nothing can be done till the workers get power ? But unless a whole lot of things are done, including the fight against war, the workers will never get power. It was tragic to think of Maxton with all the standing he still has in the working class movement, getting the opportunity to speak on such an important occasion and, instead of utilising it for backing up Attlee's attack on the Government, threw the chance away and said not a word that was of the slightest value to the working class movement.

Then came Thurtle, who took up the theme of the " Permanent Officials." This was a complete distraction and could easily have been used as an excuse for Hoare and Baldwin, or at any rate as a justification for softening down the criticism of them both. His big point was that the " Permanent Officials " at the Foreign Office, who were enemies of the League of Nations and the cause of all the troubles, should be made to take an oath of loyalty to the League of Nations. It is quite obvious that the Labour Party cannot make the headway it should while Members get off at such a tangent on important occasions such as this. All kinds of individual views are held and expressed without any clear understanding of how a party should concentrate all its best forces around a particular issue, a lead on which has already been given by the leadership of the party.

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Yet despite these individual diversions, there is everywhere amongst the members of the Labour Party in Parliament, a growing realisation of the need for unity of all forces in the struggle to overthrow the National Government and to advance the cause of the workers. The more this feeling grows, and the greatest factor in its growth will be the extent and strength of the Communist Party's campaign for unity in the country, the more will these individualist tendencies become subordinated to the general policy of the Labour Party and the task it has of developing an opposition that will end the National Government at the earliest opportunity. The need for unity is urgent in the House of Commons as well as in the country amongst the masses of workers and their allies. In the House of Commons the situation is very favourable for unity and all my work, guided and supported by my Party's leadership, will be directed towards its speedy advance.

I will do all in my power to bring about unity with the Maxtons, and at the same time to strengthen the understanding of concerted action against the forces of the enemy. In this work I'll have strong support from many members of the Labour Party who, like S. O. Davies and others in the Thaelman letter, are already participating in various forms of united activity.

There is a big change in the Labour Party in Parliament from what it was under MacDonald's leadership. This change is all to the good, and if we work as we should and can work, unity can surely be realised.

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PROBLEMS OF LABOUR POLICY

[*The following contributions have been made in response to letters which the* LABOUR MONTHLY *is sending to Labour M.P.s, Labour Candidates and others in the Labour Movement, inviting their views on the results of the General Election in particular relation to the December Notes of the Month by R.P.D. entitled "After the Election," and the article by W. Rust, "The Future of the Labour Party," in the January issue.*]

I.

By DAVID FREEMAN.

(*Late Labour Candidate for Portsmouth Central.*)

I HAVE read with great interest the articles in the January and December numbers of the LABOUR MONTHLY.

The Labour Party at the moment is passing through a crisis, or rather I should say that the crisis of 1931 is not yet completely liquidated—any more than in the international sphere the after effects of the great War are liquidated.

The first result on the Party *as a whole* of the 1935 General Election was rather similar, though not so severe, as that of 1931. There were no victims this time to be blamed as MacDonald and Co. could be blamed then.

The Party, and also of course the Party machine (as was I think the duty of the latter) were far more concerned with winning seats than making socialists. This was reflected in many other election addresses than those of Mr. Clynes. I was horrified to read one which not only had *nothing* to show that the candidate was a socialist, but might entirely have been written by a weak-and-woolly Liberal about 1905.

The immediate reaction after 1931 was a distinct move to the left. The reactions after 1935 seem to be two. First, a sort of apathy—well, what the deuce are we to do ?—and secondly, a large section of the Party represented by G. D. H. Cole want to scrap socialism and to put forward a mild reformist programme which—so they fancy, and very idly fancy—will entice the poorer supporters of the capitalist system into giving them support. Now at this game—quite apart from its morality—it is obvious to anyone who has fought elections (and I have fought four) that the Tory Party can always outbid us. No doubt the poorer supporters of

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capitalism, the small shopkeepers, the clerks, the small manufacturers, will always take anything the Labour Party can give them, *but they will not vote for us*, and from their own capitalist point of view—and in the mass they have no other—they would be fools if they did. Yes, but there are exceptions. There are, and here I think is the fallacy inherent in Cole's and perhaps Morrison's position. *The exceptions prove the rule.* By every test the middle class (upper-middle and lower) are more conservative than they were in Gladstone's time, even after the Home Rule split of 1886. In 1906 they were still in the main "Liberal." Now, in the main, they are indistinguishable from Conservatives—except, perhaps, they are more conservative. I mean even more impervious to new ideas. I have no doubt whatever of the truth of this. Nothing will alter them except (1) an unsuccessful war, which *might* lead to a mass movement towards a socialist republic, but which is just as likely, perhaps more likely, to lead to some British form of Fascism ; or (2) a prolonged and worse crisis than that of 1931. This, I think, is more probable than a war, and I think we may look for it within the next few years, perhaps sooner, if a new financial crisis develops in the United States.

But there are exceptions as I said before. I think we can rely on an increasing number of certain categories of the middle class becoming socialist, *e.g.*, teachers, doctors, engineers, scientists and technicians of all kinds. Even since the Election a new trade union formed by the Engineers and Executive Officers of the Mercantile Marine. with a real live Admiral as president has been formed and is applying for membership of the T.U.C. Bank clerks and insurance agents are also likely fields. But when all is said and done the only real hope is in the manual workers, and here I confess I do not feel that we have been as successful as we ought to have been in awakening in them that spirit of class consciousness which is essential.

Take Portsmouth Central, for instance. Here you have a core of some ten thousand workers, who like Cromwell's soldiers, "know what they fight for and love what they know." But despite ceaseless work and propaganda their numbers do not increase rapidly. The trade unions are strong, but the rank and file are apathetic. The local co-operative society is so large that if all its members voted Labour there would be no difficulty in winning the seat. Here again there is active propaganda by the few and an apathetic rank and file. Unlike many towns the ministers of religion are sympathetic, and in several cases active supporters, but they seem in advance of their congregations. There was a united front in the division at the election.

I feel myself that the only thing to do is to keep on with the process of education, and above all to stress the vital importance of the substitution for the mainspring and principle of private profit of that of public benefit. If we are steadfast in this we are certain to win in the long

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run, but this is the very thing which will make it impossible, or at any rate very difficult, to gain mass conversions from the middle class. The average middle-class man cannot understand any economic system except that under which he now earns his living. The workers can.

The question of leadership is also of vital importance. The finest strategy may be upset by imperfect tactics. Leadership is the most important factor in tactics. The one indispensable element in a leader is the ability to lead. From this point of view, speaking personally, I would rather have a right-wing leader *who can lead* and is not merely a figure-head, to one whose sentiments are perhaps more progressive but who has not got that vital and undefinable spark, which is the mark of the born leaders of men. Under a parliamentary system such as ours this is essential for victory. The leader must be able to appeal to a wider audience than the party members. He must be a figure who not only understands the semi-articulate aspirations and hopes of the masses, but who can translate them into a concrete appeal *which carries conviction*. I need only ask the question: Has the Labour Party such a leader to-day?

This quality of leadership is rare, and it is a curious fact in English history that the great democratic leaders of the past in this country have all, I think without exception, started as right-wing reformers and gradually by the pressure of events and the circumstances and development of the struggles in which they have been engaged have been forced into a leftward position. I need only mention Cromwell and Gladstone. I think this probably has a lesson for us to-day.

II.

By R. F. ST. JOHN READE.

(*Late Labour Candidate for the Westbury Division of Wiltshire*).

AMONG the many reasons given for the failure of the Labour Party at the General Election, I feel that not nearly enough stress has been laid on defective organisation. The Westbury Division of Wilts., which I contested, is a typical agricultural constituency, but contains one town of 12,000 inhabitants and four small market or industrial centres of about 4,000 each. Apart from a feverish three weeks' election campaign in 1931, little propaganda had been done in the constituency since 1929. I do not blame the divisional Labour Party for this deficiency, for it is extraordinarily difficult to organise effective socialist propaganda in these isolated rural constituencies without outside assistance, and even in many urban constituencies Labour organisation is gravely defective.

It seems to me that the greatest obstacle to effective organisation is the existing basis of the political levy, and I am glad to note the increasing

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demand that payment of the levy shall be made through the divisional parties. At present the political contributions of the organised workers to the Labour Party are drained away out of the constituencies in which they live into the central political funds of their respective unions. In rural constituencies there are not many trade union members, but out of the modest 1s. a year which they pay as " political levy," the National headquarters of the Labour Party claims 4d., the Union's central political fund normally gets 6d., while 2d. remains in the constituency to finance political organisation and propaganda.

The position is often just as unsatisfactory in the towns, and in divided boroughs like Bristol it may be positively grotesque. Two constituencies lie side by side in a big town, each with an identical number of trade unionists contributing to the political levy. If one of them adopts an " endorsed " trade union member or official he may bring into the constituency as much as £1,000 to finance the election campaign and a guarantee of £300 a year towards the cost of an agent between elections. The neighbouring constituency which is unable or unwilling to adopt a trade union nominee has to rely for its finance on the energy and generosity of its " individual members."

Payment of the political levy to the divisional parties would restore to the Labour Party that democratic control over finance which is essential to healthy development and organisation. It would dispose of the charge so often made that the Party is controlled not by its democratic membership but by a " junta " of trade union officials.

There are many obstacles to socialist progress which lie outside the control of the Labour Party. The greatest of these is undoubtedly the social and economic pressure which can be brought to bear locally against those who take an active part in politics. This is particularly noticeable in rural constituencies, as is too the increasing use of money between elections for creating a favourable impression on the minds of the more rural and less thoughtful sections of the electorate. The increasingly important rôle which money plays in the new technique of " nursing " constituencies now that the wealthy business magnate is replacing the county squire as the Conservative candidate was vividly described in a recent article in the *New Statesman.*

We often smile in a superior way when we read accounts of the way in which elections are conducted in Nazi Germany. But there is much in common between the atmosphere of elections in Nazi Germany and rural England. The winning of an election under democracy is largely a question of advertisement, and on that head the dice are overwhelmingly loaded against the Labour Party. I had promises of a vote from all sorts of black-coated workers in West Wilts., not only from shop assistants, insurance agents, typists, clerks, etc., but from people occupying important

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professional and administrative positions—but not one of them dared to assist me openly. On the other hand, all the prestige of aristocracy and wealth, the post-war alliance of Blue Blood and Hard Cash, was flaunted in support of the Conservative candidate.

Two cars were lent me on polling day to compete with the hundreds which scoured the constituency, gay with blue ribbon and appeals to the electorate to vote Conservative. Both drivers stipulated that they must drive in districts where they were not known, and neither was willing to " sport " the Labour colours. One was a teacher : he was not afraid of victimisation for himself, but he was convinced that if his political activities were known to his Conservative board of governors they would become alienated and would refuse to sanction various progressive schemes which he was advocating for his school.

Labour Party organisation in West Wilts. depends almost entirely on the railwaymen. No other group of workers are sufficiently strongly organised to call their political souls their own. Even roadmen in the employment of the County Council assured me that owing to the strong anti-Socialist convictions of some of the Council officials it would not be safe for them to support the Labour Party openly. It is possible that these people exaggerate the dangers which confront them, but there is no doubt that their fears are genuinely held.

If Labour is to win a majority at the next election, three things must be done. Firstly, we must agitate for legislation to make it illegal for political parties to organise the transport of voters to and from the poll. Such transport as is necessary should be supplied by the returning officer.

Secondly, we should press for a drastic reduction in the amount which can be expended on elections. The statutory limit is never reached by Labour, unless the candidate comes from a wealthy trade union or has very large private means. If the present amount of 5d. per voter in boroughs and 7d. in county divisions were reduced by half, Labour would lose nothing, and large sums which are at present expended in single constituencies by trade unions which provide the statutory limit for their candidates would be made available for fighting other seats.

Thirdly—and most important—we must bring into being in great industrial centres like Bristol socialist propaganda departments, which will utilise the resources of the town to co-operate with rural divisions in an organised campaign throughout the summer. A loud-speaker van is essential for this purpose. A couple of able propagandists, assisted by a group of League of Youth members to distribute leaflets and membership forms and sell literature would succeed in winning over thousands of country dwellers as Labour voters and enrolling hundreds of them as members of the Party. The only problem is that of finding the modest sum necessary to finance these ventures. That problem can easily be

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solved by the simple expedient of making the first 1s. of the trade union political levy payable, not to London, but to constituency Labour Parties, thus ensuring that each trade unionist paying the political levy becomes an individual member of the Labour Party in the division in which he lives. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this reform. Failure to effect it is bound to bring the Labour Movement into complete stagnation and contempt.

III.

By E. SHEARER.

(*Late Labour Candidate for the Aylesbury Division of Buckinghamshire*).

IN the January issue of the LABOUR MONTHLY, William Rust stated that "the Labour Party was defeated in the General Election not because there was too much socialism, but because there was too little . . . . . ." The truth of this statement is already confirmed by certain prominent Labour theoreticians who are busily writing *after the defeat* that the Labour Party must still further revise its programme and its policy to attract the middle classes, the intellectuals and the small shopkeepers to vote for Labour candidates at the next General Election. These theoreticians entirely ignore the fact that the Labour Party candidates not only suffered defeat in agricultural and middle class constituencies, but in the great industrial centres and working-class districts of the North.

G. D. H. Cole, in his *New Statesman* letter on "Limited Socialism with Social Reform," entirely overlooks the fact that the "limited socialism," compromise and *attempted* social reform made a working-class victory impossible in Germany, and drove hundreds of thousands of the middle class into the camp of Hitler and his gang. Win the middle class by all means, draw the intellectual into the Socialist movement, not by watering down the socialist policy until it is undistinguishable from Liberalism, but by presenting the case for Socialism in a clear and courageous way *as the only alternative* to the chaos of capitalism. Let the middle class see that their salvation lies, *not* in the schemes of Roosevelt, or Douglas Credit, or planning under capitalism, but in identifying themselves with the working class and fighting with them on the living issue of Socialism versus Capitalism.

The capitalist crisis is not nearing its end. On the contrary it is becoming more intensified. Last November, when every National Government spokesman was declaring his optimism, the basic British industries, coal, iron, cotton, were not reviving, but facing ever-increasing difficulties. World trade has sunk to a fraction of its former volume. Production in this country has gone back to the end of the 19th or beginning of the 20th century. Capitalists all over the world are seeking to

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escape from the crisis by wage cuts, lowering the standard of living of the working class, and finally by resort to fascism and war.

These are the issues which we of the Labour Party must face. The workers' hope lies in planned industry, planned production, planned distribution. Production and distribution *cannot be planned inside the capitalist system.* The capitalist system cannot be separated from the owning class control of the instruments of production by individual capitalists or of great capitalist monopolies. The sole effect of any government in capitalist society is to keep control of production in the hands of this class for the maintenance of its profits and its privileges.

The choice before us is not an abstract one of " Dictatorship " or " Democracy," but capitalist or working-class rule. That is our choice and that is the choice we have to put before the workers of this country. It is a choice we must put quickly. As the struggle becomes more intensified the capitalist class turns in desperation to fascism. By means of it they draw to themselves not only the disgruntled middle classes, but workers and unemployed broken by the capitalist system and disillusioned by the hesitation and compromise of their own party. This was clearly demonstrated in Italy and Germany. Fascism will smash every type of working-class organisation, co-operatives, Labour and Communist parties.

Hesitation, fear, compromise or vacillation on the part of the Labour Party will hasten the advent of fascism in this country.

Have we in the Labour Party learnt our lesson from Italy, Germany and Austria, or are we to repeat the appalling errors of our comrades in those countries ? To-day, more than at any time in the history of the working-class movement, there is need for a real welding of the working-class forces in a common front for a common objective. Working-class solidarity alone can defeat Fascism and War and build up a Socialist state. In the rank and file of the movement there is a desire for this solidarity, and it is the duty of the leaders of the movement to give this desire an expression.

In the General Election of November last, concrete evidence of this desire was shown by the active co-operation of Communist, Labour and other working-class parties in their fight against the National Government.

There may be obstacles in the way of a unity between the working-class forces in this country, but these can and must be overcome if the workers are not to suffer the fate of our comrades in Italy, Germany and Austria.

The French working-class movement has already shown us that by united action the advance of Fascism can be stemmed. Moreover, it has demonstrated that far from antagonising the middle class, it has had the effect of drawing great numbers of them into the organised working-class movement of France.

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The working-class is confronted throughout the world by a mass attack of finance capital. Capitalism in its desperation will stop at nothing in an attempt to save itself from its own contradictions. Only a united working-class movement can meet that attack. It can find a basis for unity in every phase of the workers' struggle, the miners' fight for higher wages, the fight against war, the fight against fascism.

Only when the Labour Party abandons all compromise, identifies itself completely with the workers' fight against capitalism, gives a lead for a united struggle against fascism and war, can it hope to win the allegiance and respect of those who voted for the National Government in 1935.

IV.

By GEORGE E. G. CATLIN.

(Late Labour Candidate for Sunderland, Co. Durham.)

THE Socialist movement to-day in Britain has two purposes; one positive, one negative. The positive one is the realisation of Socialism, by which I mean the abolition of economic privilege and the building of a co-operative commonwealth free from privilege. The second purpose is the prevention of Fascism in this country. Those are the only touchstones that should be applied to policy. They are practical tests.

The demand for a "united front" of the workers has assumed several forms. It was urged as a reason why we* should not follow the I.L.P., after the Bradford Conference, into secession from the Labour Party as the organisation of the main mass of the workers' movement. It was an argument that seemed to me decisive.

It was urged as part of a campaign of the widest possible nature for specific purposes, *e.g.*, against imperialist war and fascism. On this ground, speaking only for myself, I steadily favoured appearing on non-party platforms on which members of the Communist Party also appeared, and working on joint committees where the Labour Party had adequate representation. The counsel of Lenin here seemed to me the soundest sense. I did not favour the resolution of Bacon and Laski in the Fabian Society in opposition to all war waged by any capitalist government, any more than does the Communist Party. I was opposed to capitalist war—not to such action, even with capitalist governments as instruments, as might in fact check fascism and imperialist brigandage. Similarly, I have constantly supported a united front in favour of realistic support for the maintenance of the Soviet Republics against the pacifist and romantic policy of Cripps.

* Professor Catlin is here referring to the Socialist League.

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The "united front," however, is also now proposed at elections and in the formation of party policy—not only the "united front" of the Labour Party, Trade Union Congress and Co-operatives, but also of the I.L.P. and Communist sections. Should these sections be brought in to shape policy and unite in campaigns both at the elections and in the workshop ?

It is irrelevant to discuss here issues of philosophy that irritate and provoke opposition without being indispensable to the advance of the Socialist cause. As touching tactic, such a condition as will justify the Marxist-Leninist analysis may be fulfilled in the event of capitalist war in which this country is involved. The argument is strong for being prepared against such war, but I am not yet convinced that this has the consequence that we should abandon the main route to the acquisition of power.

That route, under present circumstances, is in my judgment, that towards parliamentary control. This control has, as its consequence, the enjoyment of a position where fascist resistance challenges forces which are already efficiently organised and which it is generally accepted should be exercised without vacillation. Ridicule of parliamentary democracy shows a weak understanding of the nature of power control in this country or a confusion between the position here and that in countries where the institution, with its revolutionary implications, is not native. Rather economic privilege has to be attacked as incompatible with this democracy.

My reason for reaching this judgment on tactics is that there are three conditions which favour fascism in Britain : (*a*) threat of war, such as favours a militant mood—this is already present ; (*b*) an economic crisis, definite although as yet short of entire collapse—every Marxist will agree about the proximity of this crisis ; (*c*) the growth, concurrently with these factors, of a revolutionary situation. I maintain the position, clearly indicated by Lenin, that this country, for reasons connected with its historical pre-eminence and the privileged position of its workers, is a potentially fascist country. It is such in every revolutionary situation that I can foresee, save one of decisive defeat in war. I am opposed to any policy that objectively tends to establish a fascist dictatorship. This any policy does which precipitates, or makes more explicit, such a situation, without having first consolidated power.

It does not follow that I am opposed on principle to the Communist Party's application for affiliation. The issue is whether the Labour Party's own distinctive position and tactics are well understood, established and loyally accepted. It would be necessary, before deciding on the issue of affiliation, to know two things. Would the Communist Party, as an affiliated body of the Labour Party, itself affiliated to the Socialist and Trade Union International, accept the decisions of that International,

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were these in conflict with the decisions of the Communist International ? And would Communists be prepared to accept with loyalty such a measure of Party discipline as other constituent groups, and members, of the Party (*e.g.*, single-taxers) have to accept ?

The task of Socialists is the task of the acquisition of power—power to be used for Socialism, not merely for superficial " ambulance " measures —by the isolation of the privileged economic class. Here the *front populaire*, in France, of Socialists, Communists and Radical groups, against war and fascism, offers an excellent example of the right tactic. The case for Socialism must be so presented, without dilution but without *rigor mortis* in tactical method, or irrelevant dogmatism, as in fact to win over, *e.g.*, in Russia, the peasants. In Britain, the presentation must be such as to win over all those groups attached to the values of liberty, personality and experiment (and to their own ideology concerning these values) whose interests are in fact antagonistic to the class exercising power owing, not to social function, but to the accident of possession of the means of production. The support of the Communist Party for measures which aim at the realisation of Socialism can be counted upon. Whether its affiliation, as distinct from the federative measures carried out, in my opinion, very successfully in the *front populaire*, would be tactically beneficial must depend upon its own view of the tactics of power and the total political situation. Our tactic must be flexible enough in fact to defeat Fascism. Not for a day must sight be lost of the fact that *this* is the dominant objective for the present.

It is at least arguable that the Communist Party is wise in remaining committed to the policy of the expectation of violence, since this is even in Britain a contingent possibility, but that so long as it does remain so committed it is more helpful to Socialism in a federative than in an affiliated relation to the Labour Party (*e.g.*, this may be true until such time as a wider federation of forces has been firmly consolidated with groups, hitherto radical, than at present exists).

It is obligatory to survey the psychological resistances that can frustrate, if mishandled, the attainment of Socialism and to assess the force of interests making for fascism in this country, not with the romantic optimism of I.L.P. and League of Youth idealists (valuable in its place), nor with the defeatism of those theorists who should know better, but with a dispassionate and objective judgment that is alone relevant to victory. Issues of tactic are issues of tempo ; and issues of tempo are, ultimately, dependant upon objective assessments of circumstances, not upon moralistic absolutes. Our common task is that of the realisation of Socialism and the defeat of Fascism. Tactics, then, must be strictly subordinated to these ends and we must understand that they will be so subordinated.

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THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND UNITY

By HARRY POLLITT

[*The following article consists of extracts from the concluding speech delivered by Comrade Harry Pollitt at a recent meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain.*]

I WANT to stress again the importance of emphasising the character of the turn we are going to make as a result of this Central Committee meeting, which has for us the objective of strengthening the Communist Party, making it an integral part of the Labour Movement, leading the fight for unity of action on the part of every section of the working-class movement, in every phase of the daily struggle against capitalism, fighting to transform the Labour Party from the basis of class collaboration, on to a class struggle basis, with the perspective through the whole of this activity finally of a united working-class party in this country.

All the changes we are making are done for one specific object—to make it easier for the members of the Labour Party and Trade Union Movement to establish the united front and come towards Communism. This cannot be emphasised too strongly. We have made many serious concessions in our efforts to achieve unity. But these have been done because we have been eager to win Labour Party and Trade Union members for a common policy and fight.

Our fight for affiliation is part of a policy which represents one of the most important means whereby we can achieve unity in action now, and in which we also help those thousands of men and women inside the Labour Movement who want to change the policy of the Labour Party. But we shall make a serious mistake if we do not ceaselessly link up the whole of our fight for the united front with our perspective of one united party. I can only think of my own experience since the 7th Congress of the Communist International last summer. It does not matter what you explain so far as the 7th Congress is concerned when you are unfolding the whole line, it is the final perspective of the one united party which rouses the audience to the greatest measure of enthusiasm.

It is not a question of a small Communist Party and a big numerical Labour Party. It is the political question of unity.

I think we have to remember that the Labour Party is based on the practice and policy of Social Democracy. Against that we must carry

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on a political struggle. We do not and cannot fulfil the building of unity in action by any suggestion of recruiting for the Labour Party. This is not a question of time, it is a question of principle. There is a fundamental difference between the Communist Party becoming the champions of a fighting Trade Union Movement and recruiting into mass organisations of the working class, and the Communist Party recruiting to the Labour Party. We will do all in our power to win the Trade Union affiliations to the Labour Party. But there is a difference in making that part of our line to win allies that are consciously fighting for united action, and in recruiting for the Labour Party. My personal opinion is that this issue will not arise until there is a united Political Party in this country. Having once started to toy with this idea, it is just here that it becomes dangerous, for we shall, consciously or unconsciously, be feeding those who are already talking of the liquidation of the Communist Party, even though for ourselves that may be the farthest thought from our minds that it is possible to imagine.

When Comrade Bramley told us that some comrades had stated that the policy of the United Mineworkers of Scotland would be followed by the liquidation of the Communist Party, this is a statement that cannot be passed over, and the comrades who have made that statement have to get together in a special meeting. One of the Party leaders must talk to these comrades and show them where they are wrong. Because these comrades may have expressed what others may be thinking. It shows there is a lack of understanding between the rôle of the Party and the rôle of a Trade Union.

I am alarmed that in the course of this discussion there could have been revealed what I can only describe as a complacency towards the all too slow growth of the Communist Party.

It is a very serious situation, especially as it occurs at the very moment when the influence of the Party is undoubtedly growing. We must find, not one or two local reasons, but the political reason. There must be a political reason, and it is the tendency to submerge the class struggle line of the Communist Party in general united front and many times purely Labour Party propaganda which automatically produces this situation, that the recruiting for and building up of the Communist Party is regarded as a secondary thing to the question of the United Front.

Therefore, we must conduct a big campaign on the question of the rôle of the Communist Party. The last part of Comrade Dimitrov's Report at the Communist International's Seventh Congress, where he deals with the question of consolidating the Communist Party, is the culminating point of everything that that Congress stands for.

> Comrades, in the struggle for the establishment of the united front the importance of the leading rôle of the Communist Party increases

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extraordinarily. Only the Communist Party is at bottom the initiator, the organiser, and the driving force of the united front of the working class.

The Communist Parties can ensure the mobilisation of the broadest masses of the toilers for a united struggle against fascism and the offensive of capital *only if they strengthen their own ranks in every respect*, if they develop their initiative, pursue a Marxist-Leninist policy, and apply correct, flexible tactics which take into account the concrete situation and alignment of class forces.—(Page 70, Dimitrov's Report, Price 2d.)

We have to conduct a considerable explanation of this, not only amongst our own members, but amongst those with whom we are in close contact, in united front activity.

Later on, Dimitrov says :

. . . . A successful struggle for the establishment of the united front imperatively demands constant struggle in our ranks against tendencies to *deprecate the rôle of the Party*, against *legalist illusions*, against reliance on *spontaneity and automatism*, both in the liquidation of fascism and in conducting the united front against the *slightest vacillation at the moment of determined action.*

"It is necessary," Stalin teaches us, "that the Party be able to combine in its work the greatest adhesion to principle (not to be confused with sectarianism) with a maximum of contacts and connections with the masses (not to be confused with "tailism"), without which it is not only possible for the Party to teach the masses, but also to learn from them, not only to lead the masses and raise them to the level of the Party, but to listen to the voice of the masses and divine their sorest needs." (Page 73.)

We have all to study this chapter again and again, and see in it the guiding line in the all-important task of building up and ever extending the united front through the strengthening and constant recruiting to the Communist Party.

Every Party organiser and every member of the Central Committee must be judged in the way we have built up the strength and influence of the Communist Party in the coming months. And the next Party Congress will have the opportunity of judging all of us upon how far we have learned from this Central Committee to overcome some of the weaknesses in our united front activity.

It is necessary now to plan for the Communist Party a recruiting campaign of a new type. Not just one or two big public meetings and letting it stop at that, but a campaign in which in addition to the general appeal for recruits, there is special concentration in the factories and trade union branches and all working-class organisations by leaflet and pamphlet, to get recruits on the basis of explaining the Communist Party in the way it is put in Dimitrov's Report. In this way we will not only be developing Communist Party education amongst non-Party members, but amongst our own members as well.

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We must time and time again prove in deeds that the cause of unity *is the cause of the Communist Party*, and that this is best advanced, the more powerful the Communist Party becomes. The mighty united front movement goes from strength to strength in France because of the equally mighty growth in the French Communist Party. And when sometimes workers in the Labour Party ask us why we are so insistent in our efforts to organise such a mighty united front movement and Communist Party in Britain, we must proudly reply in the words of Dimitrov in concluding his historic report to the 7th Congress of the Communist International:

> And we want all this because only in this way will the working class at the head of all the toilers, welded into a million strong revolutionary army, led by the Communist International and possessed of so great and wise a pilot as our leader, Comrade Stalin, be able to fulfil its historical mission with certainty—to sweep fascism off the face of the earth, and together with it, capitalism. (Page 80).

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IT CAN BE DONE

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A. A. PURCELL: A CHAMPION OF WORKING CLASS UNITY

By J. A. MAHON

THE unexpected death of Albert Arthur Purcell at the age of 63 in his Manchester home on December 24, 1935, took from the working class one who had, during a lifetime of service in the Trade Union Movement, made the central theme of his activity, writings and speeches, the furthering of the realisation of working class unity.

His early days as trade union member, leader and official, days of ceaseless building in a rising movement, eagerly absorbing Socialist propaganda, had firmly implanted in his mind the great idea which is the beginning of all working-class advance—solidarity, unity, against the exploiters. But he developed and carried forward this trade union idea to heights and distances which few have been able to achieve. His thought was not content with repeating the need for solidarity; he developed it into the slogan "Unity is Power," and lost no opportunity of conveying this conception to the minds of the workers.

His life falls into three phases, the early days of trade union work in his own industry, the second period as a member of the General Council of the T.U.C. and President of I.F.T.U., and the third phase when he was the driving force of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.

Born in London in 1872, his first job was in a Keighley woollen mill at the age of nine. By 1890 he was working as a French polisher in Hoxton. He was a member of the London French Polishers' Union, and also of the Social Democratic Federation.

After occupying the post of President of the French Polishers he became General Secretary of their Amalgamated Society in 1898.

In 1893 he took part along with Karl Marx's daughter, Eleanor, in the International Eight-hour Day League, a propagandist body formed in London. From 1907-1912 he was a member of the Salford Borough Council.

The National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association was formed at the end of 1901 by amalgamation of the English and Scottish unions who were thereafter successful in bringing in the greater proportion of the small sectional unions into the ranks of N.A.F.T.A. In 1911 the Amalgamated Society of French Polishers, of which Purcell was General Secretary, came into N.A.F.T.A. and he was made a district organiser.

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The second phase was opened by his election in 1919 to the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C.

In 1920 Purcell visited Soviet Russia as a member of the Labour delegation. He also took part in the discussions which resulted in the formation of the Red International of Labour Unions, and was at the foundation meeting.

He was among those who worked for the replacement of the old Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. by a General Council with far greater powers, and was elected to that body when it was formed in 1921.

From then onwards Purcell was one of the prime movers for the drawing together of the trade unions into a class force, and for the establishment of a single united Trade Union International. A step on this road was the establishment of the alliance between the British and Russian Trade Unions in 1924, Purcell being a member of the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee and Chairman of the T.U.C. delegation to Russia.

The Hull T.U.C. in 1924, of which Purcell was President, reached the high-water mark of militancy and preceded the victory of Red Friday in the following year when by an order of an embargo on coal transport the T.U.C. forced the postponement of the attack on the miners.

From 1924 to 1927 Purcell was President of the International Federation of Trade Unions (Amsterdam International). He showed vision and courage in using this position to strive ceaselessly for unity with the R.I.L.U. He met with the continuous opposition of the continental trade union bureaucracy and social democratic press. He conceived Unity not only as the inclusion of the powerful Russian unions in a united International, but as the establishment with the help of Western Labour, of Trade Unionism in the Far East and in all the colonial countries. His speech to the Paris Congress of the I.F.T.U. in 1927 remains to this day an unequalled statement of the burning need for one fighting Trade Union International.

During this period he was a frequent contributor to the LABOUR MONTHLY, and was Chairman of the Editorial Board of *Trade Union Unity*, which he founded.

Purcell not only spoke and wrote, he personally worked to bring about unity. In 1925 he attended the Atlantic City Congress of the American Federation of Labour and delivered a speech, the like of which had never been heard in that assembly, and one might add, it has never been heard since.

A year later he went to Mexico and assisted the militant work of the Labour Unions there. In 1927 he was one of the T.U.C. delegation to India and the published Report of Labour Conditions there was a valiant blow on behalf of Indian Trade Unionism.

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This phase of his life may be said to have ended, politically if not chronologically, with the betrayal of the General Strike in 1926. The collapse of the General Council and the calling off of the strike represented a terrible blow at that class unity which he had spent years to achieve. The whole policy which he embodied was reversed and an era as shameful as its predecessor had been vigorous, set in—the era of Mondism.

Purcell's thoughts on the betrayal of the General Strike are not to be found in speeches or writings. They must have been bitter. But he did not lose hope and did not abandon his aim. Taking a long view and full of confidence in the working class and the trade unions, he went on working for the day when the unions would break through Mondism and resume their march to Unity and Power.

The third phase was that of his leadership of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, whose Secretary he became in 1929.

His work there is an unequalled example of what can be done to rally the working class around the Trades Councils.

Under his leadership the Council became a centre for mobilising the workers on all the main political issues, as well as a continuous builder of organisation.

In 1931 he organised the People's Congress with over 2,000 delegates. There were big demonstrations on unemployment, against the Sedition Bill, and in support of the Austrian workers. The Annual Reports of the Council and the constant stream of small pamphlets which it issued embraced all the problems of importance to the workers. He recently took up the struggle against the slaughter of the workers on the roads.

In 1935 he replied to the Jubilee by the publication of a valuable pamphlet summarising the last 25 years' experience of trade unionism and pointing the way forward to new struggles. This pamphlet was a powerful plea for the unification of all forces of the Labour Movement.

The idea of solidarity, of unity, runs like a red thread through all his speeches and writings—that for him unity and militancy are synonymous. This is clear from his definition of a trade union :

> Whilst it has many other aspects to its nature, the Trade Union is essentially a fighting machine. That is its essence, its prime purpose, its *raison d'être*. It exists either to defend its members or to carry on their offensive against the employers when conditions suit. Any Union's history is milestoned by battles fought and won or desperate struggles where defeat has been their lot. (*The Worker's Battle for Livelihood and Life*, 1935.)

From the basic needs of the workers, Purcell drew the conclusion for the need for unity on the widest scale.

> I remember very well taking part in the work of the International Eight-hour Day League which was founded in London as a propagandist body in 1893. The moving spirit of the League was Marx's daughter, Eleanor Marx Aveling.

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The Eight-hour Day is a vast issue. It is something of universal application. It lifts the workers out of the competitive vortex. Remember the resolution of the First International in 1866 (quoted by Marx), that "the limitation of the working day is a preliminary condition without which all further attempts at improvement and emancipation must prove abortive."

Taken all round the Eight-hour Day is a fine international rallying cry. What we want is world wide agitation; but for that to succeed we must surely have international unity. (*Trade Union Unity*, July, 1925)

He wrote of May Day:

In the course of history all other classes have celebrated their victories after the event. The festivals they establish are in honour and memory of their past. It is only the working class, the proletariat which, while still fettered, has dared to declare this holiday. It has declared it as a token of an emancipation which yet lies in the future. That being so, May Day must as long as our fetters remain, be for us a day of fight. In that fight the working class march to definite slogans. This year is critical in our history, critical in the history of the working class of the world. We have an opportunity, we British trade unionists, acting co-jointly with our fellow Russian trade unionists, and with the backing of our comrades in many other lands, to bring about the establishment of a United Trade Union International. Therefore let our May Day slogan be—UNITY OF THE WORKING CLASS. (*Trade Union Unity*, May, 1925.)

Unity meant a fight against Imperialism.

What actually has the Empire meant and what does it mean to the workers? What does all the wealth of the Indies mean to the slum-dwelling workers of the East End? What benefit are the diamond mines of Africa to the unemployed in their misery? What indeed does this precious empire mean to the whole working class in this country, whose arduous work and wages of toilsome earnings hardly enables them to drag on from week to week?

Take Lancashire. I know something of the story of Lancashire. For generations the most hideous wage slavery has existed in Lancashire. Generations of hard work in humid, unhealthy mills has had its effect on the people there, as the stunted, bow-legged men and flat-chested anæmic women bear witness. Those Lancashire workers have piled up millions for the millowners. What for? So that frequently the self same millowners can have the means of establishing mills in Bombay, Calcutta, Cawnpore, in Shanghai, in Egypt, to carry on the same process of exploitation, denying by that very act the workers of Lancashire the means of obtaining a livelihood . . . . .

British capital, the wealth wrung from the workers of Britain has flown to those parts of the Empire where the raw material is immediately available, and where there is a plentiful supply of cheap labour. Thus it is we have Indian miners working for sixpence a day, Indian cotton and jute workers getting about six shillings a week; "niggers" working for almost nothing, compelled to work to pay hut taxes—to the exclusion of the white workers in African mines; "subject" workers—Malayas, Kanakas, Hindoos—tied to sugar plantations, to indentured slavery—all

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exploited by British concerns. Right well and truly has it been said that the British Empire is one huge slave plantation of the British ruling class.

We know, we talk of, we pass resolutions, about the terrible conditions of the workers in China, India, Egypt and other countries. All our talk, all our resolutions, will result in nothing unless they lead to trade union organisation in those countries. Wherever the capitalist has gone, there must we go too, to carry on our organising and educational work and to encourage resistance to capitalist oppression. Why have not the textile unions sent organisers to Bombay, Calcutta, Cawnpore, Southern China and Egypt? Why has not the M.F.G.B. sent organisers to India where the miners work for sixpence a day? (Speech at the Empire Labour Conference, August, 1925.)

Purcell had no illusions as to how Imperialism had to be dealt with.

We are in no danger, I hope, of forgetting the events in China and the lessons they teach. Can one think without horror of little children working for 12 or more hours a day and striking to secure just one day's rest in a fortnight? If we wish to end these horrors and to save ourselves from being dragged down to this level, then we cannot escape from internationalism.

Is it enough to rely, as some of our friends on the Continent rely, on the International Labour Office, based on the co-operation of employers, workers and governments? Surely the answer to this is provided by the spectacle of members of the British Government, pledged as it is to the I.L.O. and the Washington Convention, continually urging the necessity of longer hours and lower wages. (*Trade Union Unity*, August, 1925.)

In fact he had no illusion about democracy. After his plea for unity had been rejected by the A.F. of L. under the guise of defending democracy against dictatorship, he wrote:

Now I want to say that all this talk about American democracy is in my humble opinion complete humbug. "Democracy"—in the land of the frame-up, the gunman, and the spy? "Democracy"—in the land of Rockefeller and Morgan, of Pinkerton and Baldwin-Felts? "Democracy"—in the land where negro lynchings and the bludgeoning and murder of workmen striking for their rights have been a part of every-day life these many years? "Democracy"—in the land where all the forces of the law, the State and the police, the whole machinery of government, legal and illegal, are openly and shamelessly at the beck and call of triumphant plutocracy in order to perpetuate the capitalist system and the exploitation of the working people? I submit that we must not be deluded by mere *forms* of government, and that if we pierce through to the *facts* behind those forms we see that America is ruled by a capitalist dictatorship. America is the supreme example of the new Tsarism—the Tsarism of monopoly capitalism, the Tsarism of the finance oligarchy. (*Labour Monthly*, February, 1926.)

He raised the alarm against Fascism at the time of the Tsankoff coup in Bulgaria.

If the cold-blooded murders of the past weeks were all, it would be bad enough in all conscience, but it must be kept in mind that they are

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clearly a culmination to a series of blackguardly designs for encouraging attacks upon members of the working class with a view to stifling the seething mass of discontent so rampant in many parts of the world to-day.

Tzankoff and his minions are clearly doing the very work their compeers in other countries silently admire, though they may be doubtful as to this being the proper time for such events to occur, yet they will agree that the workers must be taught a lesson, and so long as it is done, no matter when and where, it will help them to breathe a little more freely. (*Trade Union Unity*, June, 1925.)

Later he warned the British movement of the danger :

There can be no doubt that Fascism is not an accidental or fortuitous growth, but the logical expression of capitalism driven to extremes by its own contradictions. That the tendency towards Fascism is not stronger than it is in Britain is due more than anything else, to the temporarily advantageous position of British capitalism. This position is certain to undergo changes. The danger of Fascism is rooted in the present system, where the dominant employing class is prepared to go to any lengths to maintain its continuous appropriation of the wealth the workers produce. All workers must realise that and be on their guard to resist every attempt to undermine or break from democracy. (Report of Manchester and Salford Trades Council, 1934-35.)

This plea for unity against war and fascism found its highest expression in the speech to the I.F.T.U. in 1927 :

Wherever capitalism has spread ; wherever industrialisation is taking place, there also ought Trade Union organisation to be established. The initiative, the stimulus towards establishing trade unionism in the outer reaches of the world should come from our International. Think of the immediate tasks confronting the I.F.T.U. at the present time in an organisational sense ; the reorganisation of the movement in the countries where it is divided, badly organised or partially organised and conscious, unremitting attention and assistance to, and purposeful development of, great Trade Union movements in Asia, Africa, South America, and so on.

If the revolutionary process that is now taking place in the East does not go beyond Capitalism—if Capitalism can stabilise itself in China and India—then the definite decay not only of British industry, but of European industry must set in ; the position of the European workers must necessarily grow worse and worse. Even as things are at present the tendency is to pull wages down to the Eastern level. The need of a powerful Trade Union International to assist the Eastern workers in organising their trade unions and raising their wage rates and standard of living will be made more and more apparent. Inevitably capitalism particularly in Europe, tends to make life more and more intolerable for millions and millions of the people.

Nor is that all. The capitalist rivalries are causing the sinister horror of war to grow again in our midst and to assume threatening proportions.

The Powers of the world are frantically endeavouring to surpass each other in accumulating the means of diabolical murder on a vast scale. Militarists, the students and theorists of future war, tell us quite frankly that should war break out it will be a hundred times more terrible, devastating and ruinous than the last great war.

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This monstrous danger is active in our midst. It is growing. The governmental delegates talk peace, but behind them are the greedy capitalist interests ; behind them also are the soldiers, the machine guns, the bombs, the armoured cars, the submarines, the poison gas—ready to destroy humanity and bury civilisation in ruins. The workers cannot, must not, have any illusions about this. The more one reflects upon this appalling menace, the more one is driven to the conclusion that only the workers can stop war. A powerful Trade Union International is the only effective instrument against war.

The Trade Union Movement—because it enrols the largest number of workers, actively engaged in the day-to-day struggle and because it naturally exerts stronger disciplinary control over its members, is the fundamental section of the general working-class movement. The building of a powerful Trade Union International is an essential preliminary to ensuring the political and co-operative world unity of the workers. It is the natural foundation for the most complete political and social unity of the working class.

No pride or prejudice must be permitted to stand in the way of the work of consolidating our International. International Trade Union Unity must take precedence over everything. Time presses. Humanity cannot wait. We must not delay to establish firmly the only means of preventing war.

We need our Russian comrades in the International. We need our American comrades. We need our Mexican comrades. We need our Chinese comrades. We need every organised body of workers in the world. No formulas, no rules, no precedents, no minor questions of policy should be allowed to stand in the way of their joining us. Personally I would be prepared to agree to the complete remoulding of the I.F.T.U. to-morrow if such would ensure the complete massing together of our forces. I am prepared to adopt any means—an all-in World Congress or any other method—if such means will add to our strength.

The consolidation of our international forces is a necessary prerequisite to the conquest of the world for labour. The workers are advancing, but how much quicker that advance would be if intelligently directed under the leadership of an all-powerful International. (Speech to the Paris Congress of the I.F.T.U., 1927.)

Later he expressed in vivid and simple phrases how the Trades Councils could aid in the great work of unity :

The work of the Trades Council is public work. That work is conducted in a certain place, amidst a certain environment, in a complex of economic, social and political conditions. That work can best be conducted if it is based upon a good working knowledge of the essential factors. " Man, know thyself," is a philosophical adage of profound significance to the individual. " Trades Councils know your locality," is an adage which is absolutely necessary for the intelligent carrying on of the Trades Council. To give dynamic purpose to the Trades Council the first requisite is a campaign of discovery. The Trades Council has to set out to discover what are the local needs of the working class. Their needs as to unemployment, wages, hours of labour, working conditions ; their needs as to education, housing and the care of their children ; to breathing room and parks, playing fields and open

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spaces ; the means of conveyance from home to workplace and vice versa ; to roads and streets and street lighting ; to public health, to the care of the sick, infirm and the aged. (Memorandum of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, 1934.)

There is not a town in the kingdom but what the working class possesses an overwhelming superiority of numbers over the capitalist class. All towns could be politically dominated by the workers in a municipal, as well as a parliamentary, sense, if only the workers were politically conscious, because the workers possess the overwhelming majority of votes. As politically, so industrially. The public services and the private services are run by the workers. All towns and districts are there for taking by the workers, are there for control by our movement, once we can realise, unite and concentrate and thus render effective the power of the working class. (Speech to the York Trades Council, December, 1930.)

In one of his last pamphlets he declared that the time has come to finish with Mondism :

The Trade Union Movement, as a matter of policy, is experimenting to see if its essential purposes can be secured by quasi-peaceful means. Conciliation is on trial. It is bound to fail. It is bound to react to the detriment of the best interests of the trade unions and the working class. Only in a Workers' State could it possibly achieve the trade union objective. Under capitalist conditions, it is by the very nature of things the logical means of producing agreements which are compromises. Complete victory over large issues is impossible of attainment. It is only a matter of time until this half-measure policy will be jettisoned and the Movement stands forth once more ready to fight in its old way unhampered by the chains of procedure.

We have reached the stage in Trade Union organisation and progress when the Trade Union Movement can employ the whole of its forces, now united and concentrated as never previously—only in those great issues which are decisive of the fate of the working class. Indeed we have reached the stage when Trade Unionists in industry must in pursuance of the aims of their trade union movement, perforce become Socialists in politics. For further National strikes imply struggles for political power.

. . . and that the time was come to go forward unitedly for power :

We cannot think of the Trade Union Movement to-day as a movement sufficient unto itself. We are simply compelled to think in terms of the general Labour Movement, Trade Union, Co-operative, political and social.

Capitalism is imposing not a peaceful transition but a violent and troubled one. What is required most at the present time is the complete class unity of the workers in every town, village and hamlet in the land. That class unity can only be achieved by bringing every person who belongs to the working class within the ranks and under the influence of the Labour Movement.

The workers gradually, laboriously, assert themselves. They wear away at the dominating economic, social and political forces and the enslaving and stultifying environment in which they are thrust by capitalism. In the process they create their own forces, learn the lessons of

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> experience, raise themselves to higher levels, glimpse new vistas of progress, lift themselves from narrow and sectional striving and achieve class consciousness. They develop a growing, direct and persevering force, increasing in numbers, in understanding, in clarity of aim and vision, raising an enlightened democracy to engage in the final conflict with capitalism, to break its economic, social and political power and to establish the New Order. (*The Workers' Battle for Livelihood and Life*, 1935.)

The question arises: Why did a man who went so far and saw so clearly, a man of courage and an entire absence of self-seeking, not go further and enter the camp of the only force which can achieve the unity he strove so hard for—the camp of Communism?

The answer is, the fact that Purcell was a product of 45 years of English trade unionism. He rose to the highest level attained by that movement, he did not wish to go ahead of it; the very forces which made him the voice of thousands of the very best of the working class prevented him from going beyond them.

This 45 years of trade union experience took a course which concealed certain realities of capitalist rule. Only at the very height of the General Strike did these realities become apparent. Until these experiences were digested the flower of the industrial working class could not enter the Communist camp.

Now they are rapidly approaching it and the work of Purcell helped them on the way.

And in the not far distant day when the flower of England's trade union millions reach Communism in their own way, the death knell of Imperialism will sound and a united working class will take the power and realise the Socialism for which Purcell ceaselessly worked.

[*We have received from the Manchester and Salford Trades Council an appeal on behalf of the Purcell Memorial Fund which they have instituted in order to support Comrade Purcell's widow who is otherwise unprovided for. We are very glad to draw the attention of readers to this fund which, as the Council states, has the personal support of members of the General Council of the T.U.C., the constituent branches of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, and of many others of the Movement's leaders, both local and national. The Appeal requests that all monies be forwarded to the Trustees (who are T. W. Harrison, R. H. Rowlands and W. J. Munro, the president, vice-president and acting secretary respectively of the Trades Council), Purcell Memorial Fund, c/o The Manchester and Salford Trades Council, 32 King Street West, Manchester, 3.*]

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NOTES ON BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

By GORE GRAHAM

THE problem of British foreign policy can be approached from many angles. We have all read time and time again the continental complaints about "*perfide Albion*"[1] and the criticisms of a British policy which wants a say in European affairs whilst at the same time—often unscrupulously—evading any definite responsibilities. The important thing for us is to establish the real substantial causes of a foreign policy which provokes these criticisms.

Britain as a World Power.

I think it would be correct to say that the British attitude towards European affairs has been determined above all by the fact that Britain is essentially a *World Power*—and certainly not because our British gentlemen are any more slippery than other capitalist statesmen. Although France is a big imperialist State with great State colonies, she is essentially a European Power. This difference between the two Powers is revealed in nearly every important foreign political development and particularly in the current problems of the Italian war and the rise of Hitler Germany. The foreign policy of the British imperialists—because they possess vital interests upon which the sun never sets—is determined by a multitude of pre-occupations touching every corner of the world. When we say that the British ruling class is a clever and capable class, we merely refer to that which is the result of its long experience as the ruling class of a great Empire, a world Power. The British imperialists, because of the magnitude of their tasks, their multitude of interests and the diversity of their problems have developed and possess a great sense of responsibility as leaders of the capitalist civilisation in which they have played a predominant part.

After the war, when the German imperialists were defeated, their colonies stolen, the map of Europe transformed into a pretty pattern of small States, and the British statesmen felt that they had not done too badly in the service of the traditional British European policy, statesmen like General Smuts pointed out that the main arena of the struggle of imperialist interests had moved to the Pacific. Addressing the Imperial Conference in 1921, General Smuts said:

[1]The letter from Page Arnot, for instance, published last month under the title of "Thieves' Cant," devoted two pages to describing these.

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> Our temptation is still to look upon the European stage as of first importance. It is no longer so . . . . these are not really first-class events any more. . . . . Undoubtedly the scene has shifted away from Europe to the Far East and to the Pacific. The problems of the Pacific are to my mind the world problems of the next fifty years or more.

The centre of gravity had shifted. In terms of the disposition of armed forces when the war was over the British Fleet could return from European waters in which the German menace had held it and Singapore became the chief British naval base. The struggles and conflicts in Europe declared people like Smuts (again repeated by him in his speech last year)[2] had become trivial domestic conflicts compared with the bigger battles which were being prepared elsewhere in the world. These factors were recognised by all students of world affairs. Apart from the writings of many fanciful publicists about the coming conflict between the white and the coloured races, all the "Yellow Peril" rubbish, etc., the great battles that were brewing in the Pacific became the subject of the writings of political students of many shades of opinion. It became recognised that the most important single inter-imperialist rivalry was that between the British Empire and the United States of America, a major conflict that influenced the general development of foreign political affairs everywhere.

The importance of the Far East as the main arena of the imperialist conflict is not far to seek. Here is a huge part of the world—China—which has not been completely divided out amongst the big Imperial Powers. Here is the scene of battle between the British Empire and the United States. On this stage has also appeared the rising Japanese imperialism, whose menace to the other imperialist Powers has grown in importance from year to year.

If the era of imperialism is a era in which practically all the world has been partitioned out by the imperialist States, a era in which the struggle has become one wherein the less successful imperialist robbers fight for a redivision of the territories, then naturally the British Empire is put on the defensive.

Major factors in world imperialist development such as these mentioned have obviously influenced the attitude of Great Britain towards European affairs. If Britain has sought to possess a decisive influence

[2] "Europe, like the poor, is always with us. But in the Far East a cloud is appearing which, although it is at present no greater than a man's hand, may come to overshadow the whole international sky in time. In 1921 I stated my view that a great change was coming over world politics and that the scene was shifting to the Pacific. I felt that the future of the world would probably be decided not in the Atlantic but in the Pacific Ocean and countries. The pot may continue to boil in Europe for perhaps another generation, but in the end it will simmer down. Europe will settle her essentially family quarrels in the end and the state of more or less peaceful equilibrium would be reached. That feeling I have still . . . . in view of the situation now developing in the Far East European statesmen should redouble their efforts to compose European differences before it is too late."

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in Europe, pursuing a policy of playing off one State against the other, then it has been because British imperialists have wanted to maintain an equilibrium in Europe in order that they can attend to more important matters elsewhere. To quote Smuts again:

> The British Commonwealth has its feet in both worlds. Through Great Britain its one foot is firmly planted on this old Continent. Through the Dominions it has its other foot as firmly planted in the outer newer world, *where the U.S.A. already plays so great a part* (our italics, G.G.).

Now in order to have that balance in Europe the British aim has been to secure sufficient influence to prevent one particular Power achieving such strength and exercising such self-assertion as to get in the way of Britain, divert its attention, and thus weaken its ability to deal with the other important world concerns. Page Arnot himself refers to the way in which British policy first supported France and then Germany and so on, all with a view to preventing one State getting too strong and securing undisputed hegemony. And this policy has certainly meant a lot of tight-rope walking and a lot of things that have earned the criticism of "perfide Albion." For as we have said, it necessarily aimed at a position of decisive influence, but without definite commitments.

Britain and the New Situation in Europe

However, during the past year or two developments in Europe have shown that, however important the inter-imperialist conflict elsewhere may be, it is quite mistaken to regard the European conflicts as small domestic issues of subsidiary importance which can be easily settled. With a re-armed Nazi Germany, nearly all the small European States, especially those created by Allied diplomacy, in a state of alarm, and a fascist Italy already waging war, Smut's conception of Europe's little "family quarrels" needs correction. The whole picture has been changed, first by the rise of Hitler Germany, and secondly by the open attack on the elder British imperialism by another expansionist dictator State, Italy. These factors have caused a tremendous harassing of British imperialism, already harassed enough. The problem of securing equilibrium in Europe in order to occupy herself with bigger problems elsewhere has remained. But that problem has become a major problem. The new conditions have therefore necessitated a reorientation of British foreign policy, and what fluctuations have taken place in British foreign policy during the past year have been the visible signs of that process of reorientation, evidence of the conflicts produced within the British ruling class between the old and the new.

The open attack of Italy on British imperialism has brought home with painful clarity how immensely worsened is the strategic position of the British in the Mediterranean, supremacy in which is of vital importance to the British Empire. In the past British empire-builders

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have safeguarded their interests in the Mediterranean very well. Beginning at the end of the seventeenth century, the British have in turn successfully opposed Napoleonic and Legitimist France, the advance of Czarist Russia on Constantinople, the aspirations of Germany and Turkey, and have established their supremacy by securing Gibraltar, Malta, Egypt, Palestine, Somaliland, controlling the Suez Canal and securing influence in Arabia, etc. They have thus assured free passage to and from their brightest jewel, India, and their other imperial possessions. With the development of modern arms, particularly of the air arm and submarine warfare, with the determined armament building of expansionist fascist States, Italy particularly, of course, as well as all the other factors of the general world situation in the present era, the whole strategic position of British imperialism has been enormously worsened. It is very evident indeed that the whole European problem for the British imperialists has radically altered. With much justification important sections of the British ruling class regard the Italian attack on the British position as a vital challenge which, if it is not met and the Italian advance repulsed, then the whole British Empire will enter a quick decline.

Of course, taken in isolation, Italy, despite all developments such as the progress of the air arm, etc., is not really a serious menace to the powerful British Empire. Quite apart from the buying-off of Italy, the policy of making a bargain in connection with her desire for colonies (a policy anticipated in past agreements and given classic expression in the unsuccessful " peace proposals " of Sir Samuel Hoare), if it came to a war British imperialism could not really doubt its ability to defeat Mussolini's Italy. But the whole point is that the Italian question, like any other, cannot be " taken in isolation."

There are, indeed, a multitude of factors playing one upon the other. Precisely because of the changed world situation, in which the seriousness of events outside Europe (Japanese expansion in China, etc.) has grown, alongside the threatening developments in Europe, the old British problem of securing European equilibrium has been raised to paramount urgency. Thus we have seen the British imperialists, who in the past have been somewhat nominal and very fickle members of the League collective security system, come forward in the rôle of energetic supporters of that collective system. The disadvantage of this to British imperialism has been precisely this ; that the more it has done in this direction to achieve its aim of securing an equilibrium in Europe, the more it has become involved in the League system and the greater, therefore, the danger of having to take on commitments—precisely such commitments it has always been the aim of British foreign policy to eschew. In this process of reorientation of British foreign policy there have been many illuminating, but inevitable fluctuations. First of all, it is pretty clear that for some time British imperialism has been increasingly concerned

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by the situation created by Japanese expansion in China. It is realised that the question of Japan and the Far East has entered a critical stage.

But British imperialism has not been able to make up its mind about the policy it ought to pursue. It could have decided at the beginning of last year that in view of the urgency of the situation in the Far East it would at once take up the question of the growing menace of Italy and carry out a deal (as it did with Germany in the Naval Pact) that would have squared Italy and have smoothed things over for a time. It did not do that ; and it is easy enough to speculate on a host of reasons why. But at the same time the British Government did not make it definitely clear to Italy what line it was going to adopt. For instance, Simon and MacDonald did not tell Mussolini at Stresa that the British Government was not prepared to let Italy have a free hand. There is reason to believe they told him the contrary. Then the British Government would later fluctuate back to a policy of determined opposition to Italy's attempts to satisfy her colonial ambitions. Pursuing one line, the British imperialists have been hankering after another. Saying that the Italians cannot be permitted ruthlessly to colonise African peoples they have expressed sympathy for Italy and given plenty of argument to show Mussolini precisely why he should. Declaring at the League that no peace agreement must be treated as a scrap of paper it has concluded a Naval Agreement with Germany and negotiated in Paris a complete sell-out to Italian aggression.

The Problem of the Colonial Struggle

As has been pointed out many times, British policy with regard to Italy is considerably influenced by the fact that the British Empire is composed of hundreds of millions of subject coloured peoples. Under British rule there are forty million Africans. Not to oppose Italian aggression in Africa, blatantly to betray all pacts of peace and to throw to the winds international obligations, even in exchange for such a deal as was embodied in the Hoare proposals, would certainly have a powerful influence on the subject peoples of the British Empire. It would create new difficulties for the British rulers of a far-flung empire who already find the maintenance of their rule difficult enough. Readers of the correspondence published in the *Times* from all manner of responsible bourgeois leaders, civil servants, colonial administrators, etc., will have seen how the importance of this factor is appreciated. " Do not let us forget at this critical moment the evil effects upon Africa . . . . a wedge of distrust between us and the masses will ruin the fair prospects of our administration . . . . Most Africans have enough of subjection and exploitation in their history to make them sympathetic towards anti-imperialist and communist doctrine " is one typical declaration from

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these many letters. These intelligent class-conscious ladies and gentlemen realise that the stability secured from a deal with Italy at the expense of the Abyssinians and the sanctity of international agreements, would create dangerous instability throughout the whole British Empire.

But, alas, there is something else which has to be considered and which creates a dilemma for the British Government. The defeat of Mussolini's colonial adventure is also likely to stimulate the masses of subject peoples in the British and other colonial territories. As " Scrutator " put it: " Italy must regard herself as a trustee for the conduct of all white peoples who have to live amongst (read, *rule over*, G.G.) coloured races." It has been seen quite clearly that the British Government has been afraid of a defeat of Italy such as would encourage, enliven and embolden the whole world of suppressed nationalities and peoples, add strength to the struggle for national independence everywhere.

The Class Issue.

But there is a far more important issue—the class issue in Europe itself.

The foreign policy of capitalist States is the foreign policy of class States inside each of which the class struggle proceeds unceasingly. The constant consideration of this factor in the handling of foreign policy is naturally inevitable. Divided bitterly amongst themselves as they are, the imperialists are nevertheless possessed by the common concern, as ruling capitalist groups, of maintaining their class domination. A defeat or unsuccess or a critical situation for one capitalist class in the class struggle, even though it may be of immediate advantage to the rival capitalist groups, and who also do not hesitate to exploit a " misfortune " of any rival, is yet felt as a danger to all, an injury on one sector of a common capitalist front. A classic example of this is given in the history of the Soviet republics, the Allied Intervention, the preservation for capitalism of Poland, the salvaging of the Eastern European States, etc.

Now it stands to reason that the biggest, the oldest and the strongest capitalist groups, develop the greatest sense of responsibility towards the capitalist system as a whole. This applies strikingly to the British ruling class. However harassed they may have become as a result of the growth of imperialist rivalry, their relations with other States have always been influenced by their feeling of responsibility, one can at times almost say, their sense of custodianship towards the capitalist system in general. A whole host of instances could be quoted in evidence. It is enough, however, to refer to the British relations with Hitler Germany and Italy.

British policy towards Germany has by no means been determined only by consideration of the purely inter-imperialist problems. British capitalists have deeply appreciated the precariousness of German capitalism. They have realised that however many difficulties an expansionist

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Nazi Germany may create, it is at any rate the only present alternative to something worse, something infinitely more menacing—a Red, a workers' Germany. Characteristically enough it was the cunning Lloyd George who, very soon after Hitler came to power, expressed very clearly this class concern about the fate of German capitalism. Readers will remember his speech at Barmouth in 1933, emphasising to those who were critical of the Nazis the need for caution. It is not merely Buckingham Palace circles that have shown a tenderness for Hitler based on mortal fear of the alternative ; accompanied by an appreciation of Nazi anti-Soviet war aims. All the responsible voices of British imperialism and the conduct of foreign policy itself ever since Hitler came to power, have revealed the same concern. The British have continually chided the French for desiring and counting on the fall of the Hitler régime. To the rulers of the great *world power* the attitude of the French, obssessed by the fear of Hitler, has seemed somewhat irresponsible. It has seemed to them that France was letting fear of an imperialist enemy provoke a policy that played into the hands of the general class enemy. On the same grounds the British Government has opposed the Franco-Soviet *rapprochement*, though it has failed to prevent either this or Soviet entry into the League. We have seen the same consideration strongly influence the British attitude towards Italy. Sir Samuel Hoare in his " farewell speech " made pretence of a British fear of fighting Italy single-handed, a pathetic, weak declaration to be made on behalf of the British Lion, were it to be taken seriously. But the important argument in the speech was that expressing British fear of the downfall of Italy and the exit from the European scene of a pillar of reaction, Fascist Italy. " Italy must suffer terribly in any case," writes Sir Edward Grigg. " We do not want to add in any way we can honourably avoid to her suffering . . . . the course for us to steer . . . . is in the first place to avoid any action which may drive Italy to desperation." This was also brought out very clearly by the diplomatic correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*. And it is not only a factor considered by the British but, naturally, also by Hitler. An article on the relaxation of Nazi attentions to Austria in the *Manchester Guardian* concludes that " the reason for Hitler's change of policy is that recently he has been troubled about the possible consequences should Mussolini fall. A collapse of the fascist régime might have a reaction in Germany, and for this reason he wants to eliminate everything that would complicate Mussolini's position at home." But despite capitalist regard for the class issue, unity between the capitalist groups is as honoured in the breach as in the observance, hence the chance for the Soviet Union and the working-class in all countries to exploit capitalist differences in the interests of peace.

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Great Britain and the Soviet Union

Reference has already been made more than once to the special qualities of the British ruling-class, their sense of responsibility towards capitalism in general. It is to this which also must be attributed the fact that the British ruling-class has been the most persistent and inspired enemy of the Soviet Union. Everyone knows its long history as leader of anti-Soviet agitation, as main supporter of all anti-Soviet movements, aggression and intrigue. However, through the development of the Soviet Union and the world situation over the years, the British Government has been able neither to isolate the U.S.S.R. nor prevent its co-operation with the League of Nations. It has had to accept the fact that the Soviet Union has become universally recognised as the greatest single standard-bearer of peace. But it has still continued to put up influential though less open opposition to the Soviet Union's endeavours. In unison with the Nazis it has sought to prevent Franco-Soviet co-operation ; in unison with the Nazis it has replied to the thesis of the " indivisibility of peace " with the assertion that war can be localised. But experience has shown that however much it may cherish the theory of localised war, chiefly as a result of its anti-Soviet predilections, experience forcefully emphasises again and again that the best policy for the British interests is one based on the principle of the indivisibility of peace. Still, the localisation of war is the line towards which British foreign policy strongly inclines and " Scrutator," singing an old song again repeats (*Sunday Times*, January 12) that " our interest in inter-State quarrels of Europe becomes remote and indirect east of the Rhine." Thus, it is a certainty that if ever a dog returns to its vomit the British imperialists will repeatedly turn to acts that will strengthen the forces making for war on the Soviet Union. We are seeing at the present time how the *Times* is only too ready to follow the Nazis in their present agitation against the Soviet Union—attacking the Soviet Union as an intriguer in Sinkiang, an organiser of revolution in other countries beginning with Uruguay, as a hypocritical League member, etc. There are influential elements amongst the British leading circles who will fight for an active anti-Soviet policy to the last ditch. Fortunately, for peace, there are strong currents in favour of a real League policy, in favour of co-operation with the Soviet Union: there are influential leaders who realise—to use Sir Edward Grigg's phrase, employed in support of a reactionary " Free Hand for Italy " policy—that " Germany is by far the most formidable challenge that menaces " European peace. And above all there is a powerful public opinion in Britain for collective peace which, like those elements mentioned above, realises that most of the problems facing Great Britain demand for their solution the strengthening of the collective security system, a policy based on the " indivisibility of peace." They also see the Soviet Union as one of the most powerful supporters of collective security against war.

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And it will therefore need a great deal of skill on the part of the British Government to get away with a policy openly anti-Soviet. Friendly relations with the Soviet Union are certainly like castor oil to most leading British capitalists and their statesmen—unpleasant, but necessary—but true it is that Anglo-Soviet relations are better than at any time before.

The Tasks of the British Peace Movement

As far as the socialist working-class movement is concerned it is obvious enough that our central and most important task is the defence of the Soviet Union. Concentrated upon our own practical work in our own corner of the world there is sometimes a danger of our failing to appreciate this. But taking a world view, there is nothing more evident than that the most vital interest of the world working-class, of the international socialist movement, is the defence of socialist construction in the U.S.S.R., and that every act must be directed to this goal.

The defence of the U.S.S.R., however, is not merely a concern of the socialist working-class. The defence of the U.S.S.R. is at the same time the defence of the greatest pillar of world peace, the great protector of national independence, the most consistent and constructive force in the League collective system. Thus, the whole movement for peace is a movement which is bound to be pro-Soviet or, at any rate, in its most colourless parts, *not* anti-Soviet. To advance the cause of peace means to popularise and win support for the U.S.S.R., which in turn is the greatest protagonist of world peace.

We have said that British foreign policy is in process of reorientation. But this reorientation is proceeding very uneasily. British policy has turned slightly towards a strengthening of the League system—it is miles removed from the realist practical policy of collective security which the Soviet Union advocates. But it has made some steps, even though one or two have seemed to be one step forward in order to take two back. Actions such as the Hoare fiasco show how little the present Government can be relied on. The task of the peace movement therefore, whether it be by bringing out the National Government and installing a Labour Government, or by any other way, is to force British foreign policy to go further and further on the path of active membership of the League system, to see that the lip-service to the League is turned into a reality. If Britain can be an active League member in connection with the Mediterranean, in connection with the Saar and her Western European doorstep, then she must be an active member in connection with east of the Rhine and elsewhere. People who say that the League is the sheet anchor of British policy and then talk about lack of interest " east of the Rhine," prepare to sell the national independence of a League member, etc., must not only be exposed as hypocritical members of the

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League, but betrayers of the whole cause of peace. We must popularise the fact that peace is indivisible. The defeat of Hoare showed that the British people are able to make their pressure felt. We must see that the whole weight of the peace-desiring 98 per cent. of the population forces the government to support actively that collective system which the Soviet Union too is anxious to strengthen and see improved. We have plenty to do to defeat all those elements who are against this course. Some of the British ruling circles are beginning to feel uneasy about the strong position which the Soviet Union has in the League as the most consistent, logical member, the member with the cleanest hands, the State with absolutely no foreign political interest apart from peace. When Litvinov supported Hoare's speech in September they knew that when Litvinov referred to Italian aggression *now* he and every peace lover and genuine League supporter had a right to think about a *future* aggression elsewhere in which the British themselves might not be quite so interested in checking the aggressor. Damned awkward, think the British, as they listen to Litvinov. The *Times* and the *Morning Post* have begun to use Uruguay (behind which, it seems, is Nazi Germany) to agitate against " Russia's double-dealing at Geneva," the anomaly of such a double-crosser as Russia being a League member, and so on. Yes, a big fight is necessary to ensure a British foreign policy *really* based on active membership of the collective security system and on friendly relations with the great peace State.

Indeed, the securing of friendlier relations with the Soviet Union is a major task in the struggle for peace in Great Britain. The Nazis are the chief instigators of war, the greatest menace to world peace and the Soviet Union. What is a chief pre-occupation of theirs? The disturbance of friendly relations between England and the U.S.S.R. In itself that is enough to determine for us the importance of securing a development of Anglo-Soviet relations. In the cause of world peace and the defence of the Soviet Union we must fight for better relations between our Government and the U.S.S.R., the development of cultural relations, of trading relations, the conclusion of a pact of friendship between the two countries, and so on. The work of the British peace movement, of the movement of British friends of the Soviet Union for the strengthening of relations between Britain and the U.S.S.R., is work of paramount importance to the whole cause of world peace.

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THE MINERS' TWO BOB[1]

By ARTHUR HORNER

THE present position in the coalfields of Great Britain can be attributed to the unsatisfactory terms which were imposed upon the district organisations of the M.F.G.B. at the end of 1926. The miners, betrayed and exhausted, were no longer capable of resisting district settlements embodying worsened wage and working conditions. In the place of a national agreement the miners had foisted upon them varying district agreements. With the miners thus separated into districts the coalowners embarked upon more sharp inter-district competition, waged at the expense of the miners in every district ; wages were reduced, old customs were destroyed progressively until the position had become intolerable. It was the cumulative effect of many changes in working conditions, and the inability to resist effectively, revealed in 1931 when Scotland and South Wales struck separately, that led to the national drive for a uniform wage increase and a national agreement. 1935 witnessed a remarkable recovery in the miners'ranks from the defeat of 1926. A new morale was born, and everywhere local strikes were organised by the effort to redress the evils of district agreements. For two years the Mineworkers' Federation of Great Britain had engaged in efforts to meet representatives of the Mining Association. These efforts were fruitless. The Mining Association refused to recognise the right of the M.F.G.B. to speak on behalf of the miners of Great Britain. They urged that such recognition would result in national mining strikes, meaning that the miners are less powerful when separated into districts. Numerous appeals to the Government met with little real gain. The Mineworkers' Federation were then left with only one possibility, resort to their own power, and an appeal to the wide court of public consideration. In this way the miners' campaign was begun. The course of events since that campaign was set going will be familiar to all for it is a matter of very recent history. The tremendous part played by the mining crisis (as it now became), the General Election, the huge ballot vote in favour of a resort to strike action, if necessary, to achieve their demands, and the widespread public sympathy with the miners stimulated the Government to take more vigorous steps in dealing with the mining situation. Representatives of the Mineworkers' Federation have met representatives of

[1] *The Miners' Two Bob*, Edited by W. H. Williams (Labour Research Department). Martin Lawrence. 104 pp. 1s. paper ; 2s. 6d. cloth.

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the Mining Association (not as a national body, but to inform the miners of the views of the districts), and negotiations are proceeding.

The issue of *The Miners' Two Bob* is to be welcomed at this stage for it gives a clear picture of the basic questions involved in the present dispute.

The first section of the book deals in great detail with the complicated wage system, in accord with which the present actual wages of the miners are arrived at.

It shows very clearly that in the main, under the present district agreements by means of the system of carrying forward deficiencies from one year to the next the miners are practically precluded from earning more than the minimum wages.

As the report of the Secretary for Mines said in 1934 (quoted on p. 6):

"Although wages were everywhere (except in the two cases mentioned above)[2] paid at the minimum throughout the year, in several districts the wages ascertainments at times yielded percentages above the maximum; but the arrangements for the recoupment of deficiencies carried forward from previous periods did not permit an increase in the percentage payable."

The figures on which these ascertainments are calculated relate, as is demonstrated, only to the sale of coal at the pit-head and do not take into account the profits made by the various companies engaged in the extraction of by-products from coal nor from the activities of selling agencies or wagon and timber transactions.

The miners maintain therefore, in view of the fact that the companies operating in this section of the coal industry are directly linked in so many cases with the actual coal owing companies, by means of subsidiary companies, directorial connections, etc., that the ascertainment figures do not show a true picture of the profits of the industry. This contention could not be more amply backed than by the facts produced in the first section of the book.

One quotation given from the *Economist* (on p. 8), makes this point clearly:

"The profits shown by these concerns[3], however, do not agree with those revealed in the monthly audits of the joint accountants for wage purposes under the national agreement for in the aggregate they are substantially more. There is, however, a simple explanation of the difference. The audits relate exclusively to the earnings of collieries on the sale of

[2] In Warwickshire from August to December, and in North Staffordshire during April and May.

[3] In this issue of May 2, 1925, in an analysis of the financial results of South Wales colliery companies.

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coal. The profits derived from the manufacture of coke and by-products and other commercial activities are excluded from the scope of the audit, while another important factor of which the audit takes no account is the income derived from investments, which in the aggregate amount to fairly considerable sums."

Our claim to negotiate for the whole of the industry differs in no way from the principle underlying the agreements governing most of the other large scale industries in the country, and the following statement of the Samuel Commission of 1925 included in this chapter (Chapter I.) illustrates this clearly :

" The policy underlying the agreements of 1921 and 1924 is the rational prescription both of the general level of minimum wages and of the principles for the determination of economic wages. The rightness and necessity of that policy are in our view established. The Ministry of Labour have supplied us with a list of thirty industries which have some form of national organisation for conducting wage negotiations. They include so far as we can see, every important body of wage-earners in the country."

The profit figures given support our claim that the industry can pay, and in the second chapter of the book," The Capitalist Organisation of the Coal Industry," are analysed, ably and fully, the profits and the links which exist between the coal owning companies and the iron and steel industry.

The coalfields are dealt with separately and show the tremendous interlocking which exists between the various districts on the capital side. Our criticism that the owners use their national organisation for " competition " between the various coalfields, thus beating down the standards of wages in the better paid districts is amply justified and gives additional weight to our claim for a national wages agreement.

The third section of the book deals exclusively with the position of the coal trade to-day.

The decline in British coal which has undoubtedly taken place since the period before the war is analysed, and I extract one quotation from this chapter :

" The reason for the present unsatisfactory state of affairs is to be found in the fact that the coal industry has taken on a special rôle in the period of capitalist decline. It will be clear from the foregoing analysis that no longer can the coal industry be considered apart from other branches of heavy industry. The production of coal is the first stage in a continuous process, that ends in iron and steel and by-products. Cheap coal is necessary to these enterprises and when it is remembered that fine links of financial penetration have been established between the main groups

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which operate in these industries it becomes clear that the real values created in the coal industry may be more profitably realised at a later stage. And this is precisely what is happening. A large portion of the value created in the coal industry is thus transferred wholesale into other industries." (p. 77.)

On the other hand, it should always be remembered that the *main* loss of employment is *not* due to declining trade, but to an increased production per man-shift, whether affected by a greatly increased use of machinery or by speed-up methods. This is shown by the following approximate figures :—in 1920 the number of employed miners was 1,200,000, but in 1934 720,000 only were in employment, *i.e.*, a reduction of some 480,000. Production in 1913 was 260 million tons, and in 1934 210 millions. This loss in trade of 50 million tons is estimated to represent a reduction of 180,000 men. But at least 480,000 have lost their jobs. We find that the difference between these two figures is largely accounted for by the fact that the output per man-shift increased from $14\frac{1}{2}$ cwts. in 1920 to $23\frac{1}{2}$ cwts. in 1935. This increase, it is estimated, is responsible for the displacement of about 280,000 miners.

The chapter on the " History of the Mineworkers' Federation " is a brilliant exposition of the growth of the organisation. No history of the miners' trade union organisation exists, and this section will serve admirably to enlighten those who are not familiar with the great struggles of the miners in the past.

The concluding chapter is an able and clear statement of the main issues involved in the present dispute. No attempt has been made to provide a scheme to settle the problems of the coal industry, but the causes of the decline in coal and the roots of the problem are set out in such a manner that the immediate problem is clear while the basis for a more permanent solution is indicated. Thousands who have followed closely the cause of the miners' campaign and those who have read the concise and objective statement which this book is, cannot but agree with the final paragraph which reads :

" The miners' demand is the least that must be conceded. Those who say that the industry cannot pay are guilty of the cruelest deception in the interests of private profit ; are guilty of the social murder of a section of the population who win coal from the earth under the most harsh conditions of labour. Millions who consume coal would suffer the discomfort of a coalless world rather than risk life and limb as do the miners daily in the coalfields of Great Britain." (pp. 97-8.)

This conclusion has been supported to the hilt by the facts presented in this book. The miners of Britain will welcome this book which has been prepared by the Labour Research Department, and I hope it will get the wide sale it deserves.

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BOOK REVIEWS

BREAKING NEW GROUND.

Men and Motors. Communist Party of Great Britain. 24 pp. 1d.

IN February the A.E.U. will be holding a conference of representatives of its members employed in the Motor Industry. This, we hope, will be the commencement of an intensive trade union recruiting campaign which will make it impossible to describe this prosperous industry as being one of the worst organised sections of engineering. In such a campaign this pamphlet, *Men and Motors*, will prove of great value. In its twenty-four pages it presents a really concise picture of the developments within this industry, which in the last twenty-five years has made such tremendous strides that to-day it is one of the primary industries of this country, an industry of great political and economic importance.

In an interesting manner facts and figures, from which the necessary deductions are made, are presented ; facts and figures, which not only show the development in production, but which also show the enormous profits gotten by the motor employers, the tendency to monopoly within the industry and the developing fight for supremacy between the great firms of Fords, Morris, Austins, Standards and Rootes. This competition for the market is going to have its effects on the standards of the motor workers, whose conditions will become intolerable unless they organise to protect themselves.

Already there has been a brutal speed up and exploitation of human labour power. The employees are to-day treated as so much "bag and baggage," to be bought when required and stood off at a moment's notice when the boss thinks fit.

The open shop is the slogan of the motor industry, and it is maintained by the big monopolists by what only can be described as "gangster methods applied to the factory."

But whatever methods are employed by the motor employers to maintain and increase their exploitation of the workers, trade union organisations will be built. Trade union traditions are strong in this country, and the capacity of the motor workers to fight has been expressed in the famous Ford, Austin, Pressed Steel and Morris strikes. The motor workers will prove to the employers that they will tolerate neither gangsterism nor the methods of feudalism in the factories of this country. We all can help them in this fight by getting this pamphlet into the hands of every motor worker and engineer quite apart from the fact that every reader, whatever his trade, will also find that this is an absorbing pamphlet.

Twenty-four pages, commencing with a preface by Jack Tanner of the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, a concise picture of the motor industry and all that that implies, concluding with a suggested list of demands to meet the needs of the men producing motors.

P. ZINKIN.

HOW A LIBERAL TURNED TO REVOLUTION.

I Change Worlds—The Autobiography of Anna Louise Strong. (Routledge.) 422 pp. 15s.

I Change Worlds is an extremely interesting account of the author's experiences in her two worlds—that of American capitalism until 1920, and that of revolutionary Soviet Russia from N.E.P. until the present day. She also writes of Mexico and of revolutionary China during the time of Borodin's stay there. During her fifteen years in the U.S.S.R. the author travelled in nearly all parts of the Soviet Union, at first doing famine relief work with a Quaker organisation, later as a correspondent for the American press, and finally as editor of the *Moscow Daily News*.

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From different points of view the book is of great interest to revolutionaries, but its importance lies less in its descriptions of things observed in America and the U.S.S.R., as in the account the author gives of her conversion from the ideology of the one world to that of the other, which was only fully accomplished after fifteen years in the Soviet Union. For an American "Liberal" upbringing dominated her thoughts and ideals; and her Socialism, in its earlier manifestations in America, was naturally only an expression of these thoughts and ideals. Socialism, she concluded, was a world in which her early beliefs could be realised—in a word, it was that very efficiency and organisation which were loudly proclaimed as the capitalist ideal in America. She therefore repudiated strongly the idea of the class struggle and the revolutionary effort necessary to attain Socialism. Even though the author played a prominent part in Left Wing Labour organisation in the West, and particularly in the Seattle General Strike of 1919, she, together with most other American radicals still had only the haziest of ideas concerning the achievement of working-class power and was easily diverted from the real goal at every stage by such ideas as co-operatively-owned workers' enterprises which were to lead peacefully to complete Socialism. She says, "We seem to have seen world revolution as a sealed packet which God and the inevitable laws of human progress would give us . . . We passionately believed that a Great Change was coming, but when or how we did not know."

It took fifteen years in the U.S.S.R. to sift these ideas and beliefs of Anna Louise Strong and to bring her finally to a clear understanding of the class struggle and the meaning of revolution. We should not lose sight of the fact that it was actual contact with the life of the workers in the Soviet Union that produced this change.

P. B.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS IN MODERN GENETICS.

Nature and Nurture. By Lancelot Hogben, M.A., D.Sc., Professor of Social Biology, University of London. (Williams and Norgate.) 143 pp. 6s. 6d.

PROFESSOR HOGBEN'S book is primarily a technical work which discusses the available methods for the scientific study of human genetics and is the best book on the subject to date. Unlike most leading scientists in capitalist countries, the author is aware of the social implications of his work, and, especially in the first and last chapters, shows that the dreams and reactionary nostrums of pseudo-scientists of the above type have little or no scientific basis. Throughout the book the fact is stressed that the hereditary biological endowment of the individual is only *one* factor in the development of the characteristics of that individual, the important complement being the environment in which that individual develops.

> The individual differences which men and women display are partly due to the fact that they receive different genes from their parents and partly due to the fact that the same genes live in different houses. (p. 11.)
>
> . . . . No statement about a genetic difference has any scientific meaning unless it includes or implies a specification of the environment in which it manifests itself in a particular manner. Characteristics of organisms are the result of interaction between a certain genetic equipment inherent in the fertilised egg and a certain configuration of extrinsic agencies which include the conditions of life in the uterus and the external environment in which the social existence is carried on. (p. 14.)

This stressing of the complementary relation of organism and environment is in refreshing contrast to the usual reactionary blurring of the environmental factor which tendencious bourgeois writers find convenient.

It is a pity that Professor Hogben's mildly ironical and diffuse style should blunt the edge of his criticisms. Most of the concrete work on human genetics has been done on the inheritance of a small number of rare diseases, and it is only

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with these that a geneticist would feel confident in suggesting prevention of propagation ; and even then he would remember that these diseases are only, *at present*, incurable. It is important to remember that what are transmitted to offspring are gene differences which affect the liability to contract a disease ; the disease will not necessarily follow from a given genetic endowment. Thus, of a family of five children living in a London cellar, three may have heart disease because of an inherited predisposition to heart disease. Bourgeois eugenists and " birth-control-lower-classes " cranks would argue that these children should never have been born. Genetic science says that in decent living conditions they would not have contracted heart disease, in spite of the inherited predisposition. Thus knowledge that science gives cannot be used because of the limitations of capitalism.

We have pointed out above that Professor Hogben does consider the relation of organism and environment as a complementary relation, in that an organism with a given genetic fund may react in different ways in different environments. But although he remarks that " the geneticist has begun to deal with the gene as a reagent in the process of development " (p. 15), rather than as a simple biological atom, throughout the book we find this organism-environment relation presented only as a relation of " isolates " and not as a dialectic interaction which may produce change in each factor. In a reaction the reagent itself also is changed. Yet without facing the problem of the modification and development of the gene, genetics will remain rigid and one-sided, and the problem of the method of organic evolution will remain unsolved. Zavadovsky in *Science at the Cross Roads* (Kniga, London, 1931), has analysed the crisis in the theory of evolution and has indicated the approach of dialectical materialism towards this problem.

Professor Hogben's book would have been much more valuable therefore, if some indication at least had been given of these wider aspects. It would have obviated his still too rigid treatment of *Nature and Nurture*.

K.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

Sunday Worker. Vol. I. No. 1. 50 East Thirteenth Street, New York, U.S.A. 5 cents. (sub. $1.25, 6 months, 75c. for 3 months).

Police Methods. Solicitor. (National Council for Civil Liberties, 99a Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.2.) 1s. 3d. per 100, 8s. 6d. per 1,000, post free.

Men and Motors. Preface by Jack Tanner (E.C. of A.E.U.). Communist Party, 16 King Street, London, W.C.2. 24 pp. 1d.

The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky. V. I. Lenin. (Martin Lawrence.) 110 pp. 1s. 6d.

1936 : A Diary illustrated page by page by James Fitton, James Boswell, James Holland. (Martin Lawrence.) 2s.

Raise High the Banner. J. Gollan. (Young Communist League.) 16 pp. 1d.

6th World Congress Young Communist International : Resolutions, etc. (Young Communist League.) 15 pp. 1d.

Tuatamur. Leonid Leonov. (Collet's, London.) 50 pp. 1s. 6d.

Benia Krik. Isaac Babel. (Collet's, London.) 96 pp. 2s. 6d.

The End of Rationing and the Standard of Living in the Soviet Union. (School of Slavonic Studies in the University of London.) 28 pp. 2s.

Conscription in Australia. Leslie C. Jauncey, Ph.D. (Allen & Unwin.) 365 pp 10s. 6d.

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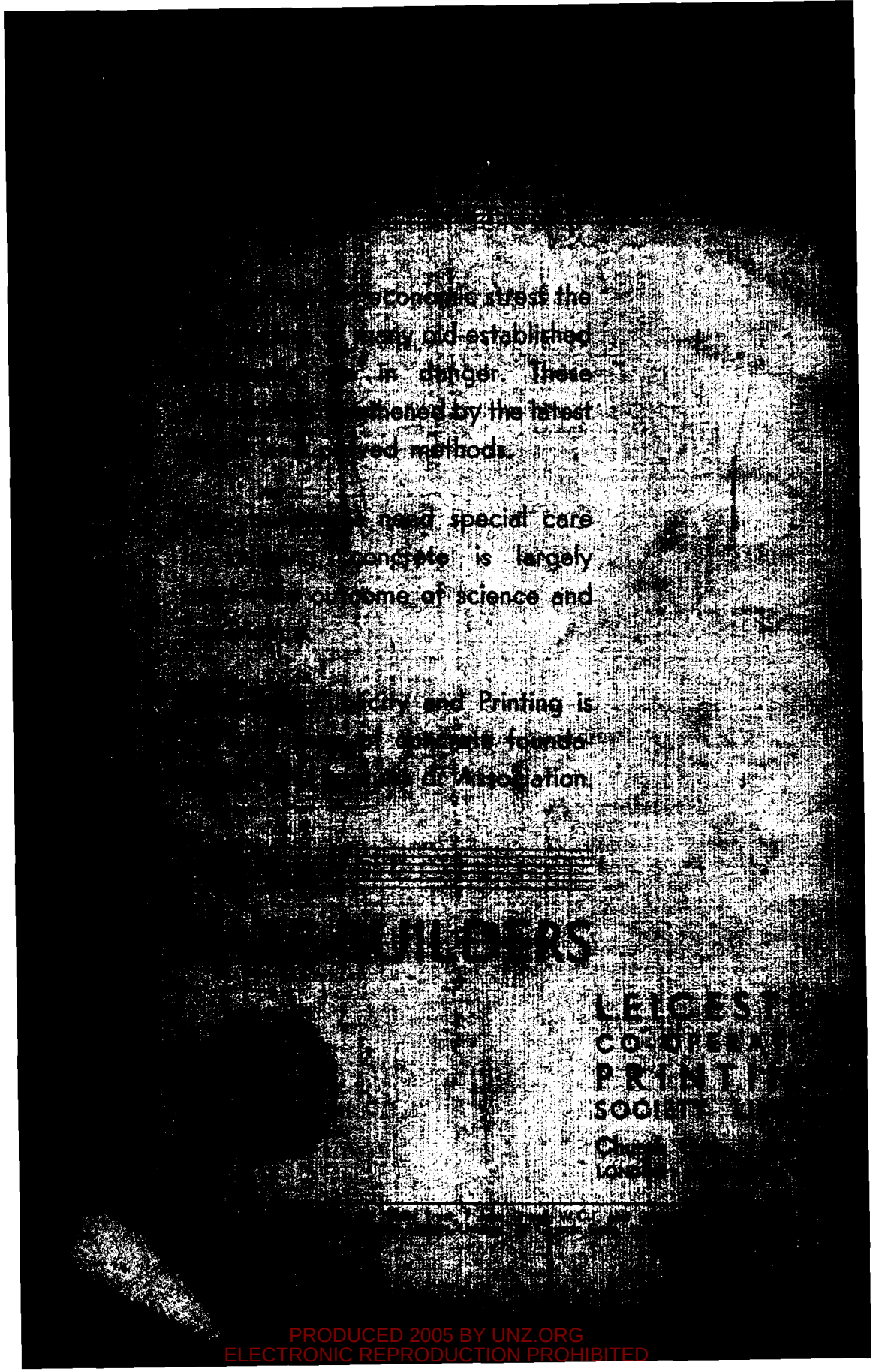

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